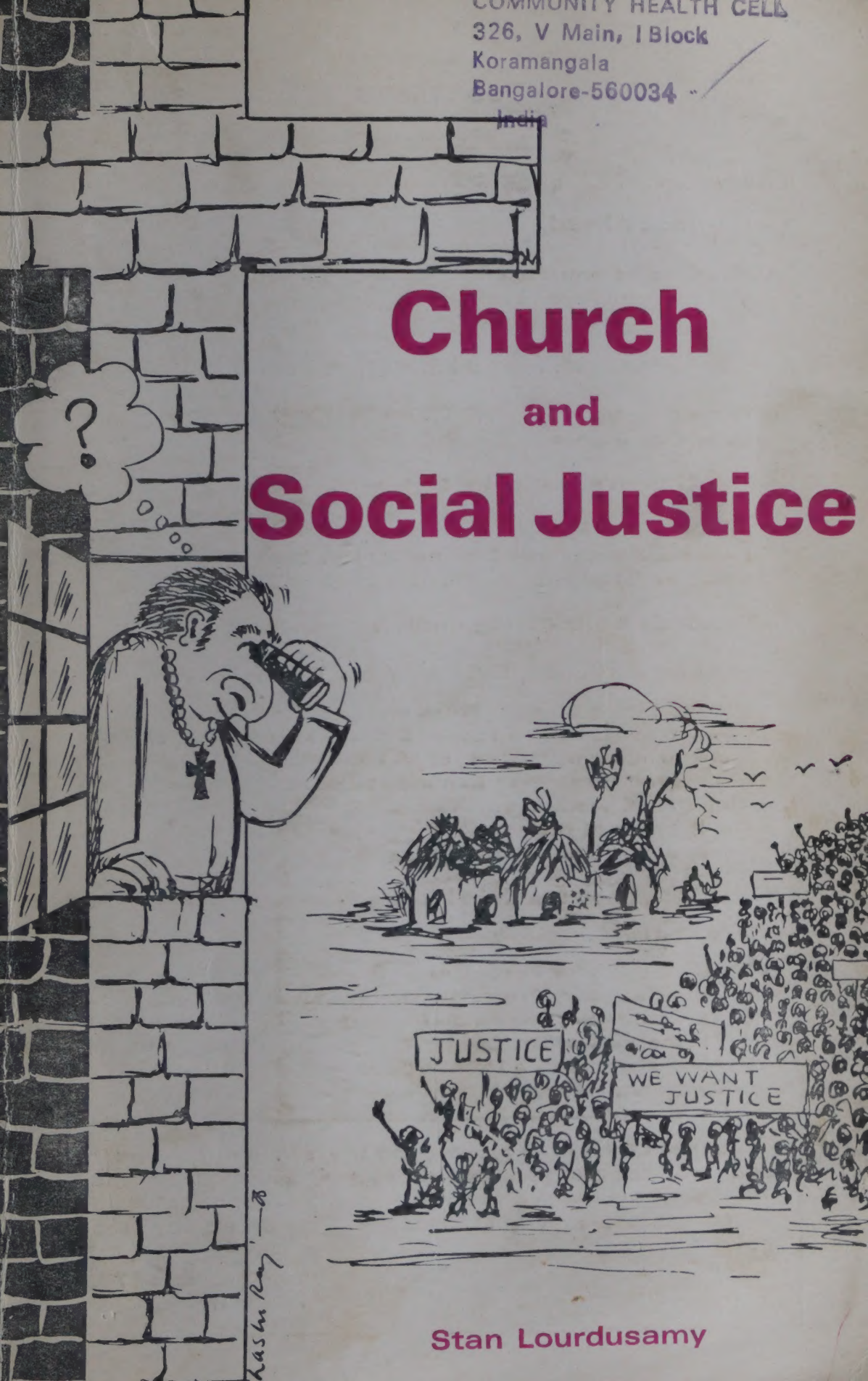


Church and Social Justice



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Third World — hunger, economic exploitation, colonialism — all these signify an opposition to Christ by the powerful."

Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, 1977,
Now JOHN PAUL II

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Introduction

Nestor Paz, a 24 year old Bolivian, died on October 8, 1970. He died of starvation in the jungles of Bolivia. Three months before, he had joined the guerillas to fight the combined forces of the economic, social and political elite of his country who, he felt convinced, were responsible for the cruel poverty of the majority of his fellow countrymen. For him love was not just a word. It was life and the giving of life for others, especially those others who had been reduced to economic misery, social helplessness and political victimization. In the circumstances, he felt sure that the only way of coming to their rescue was to join the guerilla ranks "to do something meaningful for others, to put into concrete actions my desire to love", to create "a free territory of free people who are masters of their own destiny", "to defend the unlettered and undernourished from the exploitation of the minority and to win back dignity for a dehumanized people". Nestor knew that the step he had taken would cost him his life either through a bullet or through starvation, but he looked upon his death as the vocation of his life, the fulfilment of man and "the point of total humanization". In this sense he wanted his "death to be full of meaning" and he believed that "nobody's death is useless if his life has been filled with meaning".¹

Nestor's life and death is not only moving, but can also be disturbing to those who, as members of the Church, have always professed service and charity to their neighbours. *That charity could lead one to such an extent and take such forms could create a feeling of uneasiness about one's own life and commitment.*

1. For details, see Samuel Rayan, "I Want My Death To Be Full of Meaning", in "Jeevadharma", May-June, 1977, pp. 247-59.

And then, when we look into the Bible, we do see how radical is the call of God :

"I hate, I spurn your pilgrim-feasts;
I will not delight in your sacred ceremonies.
When you present your sacrifices and offerings
I will not accept them,
nor look on the buffaloes of your shared-offerings.

Spare me the sound of your songs;
I cannot endure the music of your lutes.
Let justice roll on like a river
And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

(Amos 5. 21-24)

There is surely an increasing awareness within the christian community of the disparities and injustices existing in today's world. *More and more, the call of the Gospel is understood as a call for liberation: from sin, death, oppression, injustice, and for a life to be lived in freedom, love, righteousness and community.* Many christians are discovering how shockingly radical the biblical message is. In the agonies of repressive situations, in the harsh realities of exploitative systems, in the context of domination and dependence, they perceive elements of hope and direction in the life and total commitment of Jesus Christ.

At the same time, when one looks at the organization and functioning of the institutional Church in the present situation of our country, one has to admit that the Church seems to serve more as a stabilizing and status-quo preserving factor than as a liberating force. The institutions through which the Church manifests itself in our country are more expressions of authority, hierarchy, clearly defined roles, functions and positions, than of a constant search to meet the crying needs of the majority of our people. *The rigidity of the Church's structures seems to inhibit it from becoming sensitive to the needs of the suffering masses and flexible enough to assume new roles in our society.*

It will be my effort in the following pages to discuss the present situation of India and the need for liberation in our country (I). I will then reflect on the outer and inner institutional constraints that make it extremely difficult for the the Church to answer these urgent needs (II). And I will finally give a sociological survey of the Church's social involvement (III). and show how individuals and groups can answer the call of the Gospel to set free the bonded masses of our society (IV).

1. The Task Ahead

The feeling of nationalism which reached its height at the time of Independence gradually made way to the spirit of development in the fifties and sixties. The Community Development Programme (1952) intended to bring even the most remote, forlorn village into the national network of development. Then, the leaders of the country, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, ushered in the Five-Year Plans by which the nation was to march forward towards self-sufficiency in meeting the basic needs of the total population by developing the irrigational, agricultural, and industrial assets of the country. Consequently, we see the construction of huge dams, the multiplication of inputs to modernize the agricultural sector and a proliferation of industries of every kind.

The Present Situation

When we look at the per capita income and the gross national produce, we do recognize an increase, a growth. When we turn our attention to the relations of production within the country, that is, the distribution of the means of production and the social organization with regard to work, *we however discover that, by far, the greater part of the land and the centres of production are in the hands of very few*, and that profits are often not invested for productive purposes. Even if they are, the benefit goes to the economic elite. For example, between 1960-68, the consumption of the upper 40% of the population increased by 4.8%, whereas that of the lowest 10% decreased by 16%. *The result is a situation in which luxury and misery rub shoulders*. While a few enjoy very great freedom of choice, the great majority are deprived of almost all chances of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and subsist in living and working conditions unworthy of human beings.¹ This is especially true of the Scheduled Tribes and Castes and the landless agricultural workers.

Scheduled Tribes

In 1971, there were about 38 million tribals in India. Their major occupation has continued to be agriculture. They

1. For details, see Duarte Barreto, "The Indian Situation",

mainly cultivate rice, but also grow maize and other millets in the uplands. They also practice horticulture and produce various vegetables, which they sell in the local markets. What is distinct about their agricultural economy is their co-operative endeavour, group solidarity and reciprocity of obligations. These characteristics flow from their once communal tenure of land, and extend even to other economic activities such as hunting and fishing, where the village acts as a group and the catch is shared according to customary rules.²

Co-operation and group solidarity are praiseworthy and have played a very healthy role in the past, but what the tribal population is now going through and will continue to go through in the time to come is anything but encouraging. For one thing, the few tribals who succeed in getting formal education invariably move out of the community. Individuals who can be instrumental in the development of their communities are just not there. Secondly, the money market of the nearby towns, which the tribals are not used to, plays a disastrous role in so far as they are invariably cheated by the merchants and money lenders. The village money-lender gives them money and tries to acquire their land by proceeding against them in a court of law. Many a tribal has been reduced to the condition of a bondsman for life because he has not been able to repay a loan. Thirdly, various forest laws are depriving the tribal people of their traditional rights. Game laws prevent them from hunting. Excise laws prevent them from brewing their own liquor. Finally, there is an ever increasing displacement of the tribal population as a result of the establishment of the big industrial units in the north-eastern part of India which are some of the most thickly populated areas by the tribals. With inadequate compensation paid for the land they originally owned and their being given new land in exchange mostly in hilly areas, without irrigational facilities, and situated at long distances from their housing sites, such displacements have done irreparable harm to their livelihood. Besides, because the majority are illiterate and without skills, they cannot be absorbed in technical posts. Even for low-paid posts, like those of peons and chowkidars, they have to face competition from their non-tribal counterparts, and are moreover subject to the prejudices and indifference of non-tribal recruiting officials.³

2. M. Y. Naidu, 'Pains of Industrialisation', in EPW, 1976, pp. 830-1.

3. *ibid.*

Scheduled Castes

About 15% of India's population come within this category which is mostly dependent on agriculture. Since land is the chief source of income it is the distribution of land and the methods of utilization which shape socio-economic structures. The top 5% of the rural population own 40% of all the land, while the bottom 50% has only 4%. In the majority of the villages 10% own most of the land, 20% are middle farmers, and the remaining 70% form the bulk of the peasantry, viz., the marginal farmers and landless labourers.⁴

Whether we take the Chamars of north-central India or the Pallans of south-east India, the landless agricultural labourers are economically tied to the village, especially to the land-owning classes, as tenants, traditional workers and wage labourers. Even those who are classified as tenants rarely hold permanent tenancy rights, but are rather tenants-at-will. The land which they cultivate gives them grain which lasts them, on the average, for only four months of the year. The agricultural labourers usually attaches great importance to any land which he holds as a tenant, but depends for a much larger part of his family's subsistence and for most of the year on the wages which his family receives as labourers. Added to this is the accelerated scarcity of land in the village. Hence the tendency on the part of landless agricultural labourers to seek employment in the mines, and the cities as coolies and rickshaw-pullers.⁵

The declared policies of the government with regard to freeing the rural people from indebtedness and human bondage, and the implementation of land reform and rural credit through the banks *have actually a very limited effect*. To cite but one example which can be considered quite typical, there is the state of affairs in a district of Karnataka where the top officials have taken some serious steps towards the implementation of Land Reform. During the year 1975-76, 35,000 tenants have applied to the government for the ownership of land that they have been cultivating. If their rights are honoured, some 85,000 acres of land will be distributed. But this figure represents only a meagre part of the 10 lakh acres of government and surplus land that can be distributed. In

4. "The Rally", no 4, 1976. For details on land reforms, see Duarte Barreto ("The Indian Situation", pp. 40-1) and John Maliekal ("Post-Independence Economic Policies", pp. 29-46). On Scheduled Castes, see also the CSA booklet, "Castes and Social Classes".

5. B. S. Cohn, "The Changing States of a Depressed Caste", in "Village India", Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961, pp. 64-5.

other words, only 8.5% of the total distributable land is going to be distributed, if at all. According to the current government procedure, it will take about $4\frac{1}{2}$ years to do it! In the meantime, the landowners are having recourse to the courts to stall the process of distribution. In such situations, the people who suffer most are the poor tenants.

Landless Labourers

The most helpless section in the rural population are the landless agricultural labourers who comprise 27% of the total rural population. They derive their livelihood from working in agriculture, either as day-labourers or as attached labourers (bonded) to particular landlords, or as share-croppers. Most of them do not own implements and other assets and have no option but to sell their labour power.⁶ The average daily earnings of adult male agricultural labourers is Rs. 1.43 according to 1965 price level. As a necessary consequence, more than 60% of agricultural labour households are in debt⁷.

Pretty much in a similar plight are the poor peasants who own small plots of land, up to 2 50 acres. Because their holdings are not economically viable, they are forced to hire their labour to bigger farmers, mainly as small tenants and share-croppers, and hence they are more labourers than producer-farmers. Although they comprise as much as 60% of rural households, they cultivate only 9% of land area and use 15% of irrigation facilities. Besides, the poor peasants occupy the poorest land, and the quality of their plots deteriorates because of intensive use. Due to their weak economic position they also get a low share of credit facilities available in the rural areas; in 1973-74 for example, they got only 5% and 4% of the total term-loans advanced by the public sector banks and private sector banks. This is because land ownership still continues to be an important collateral for loans.⁸

Yes, these are the pitiful conditions of the great majority of our people, especially those who belong to the weaker sections of our society. Why has there not been more radical changes since Independence?

6. Dalip Swamy, "Differentiation of Peasantry in India", in EPW, 1976, p. 1933.

7. "Agrarian Reforms", "Report of the National Commission on Agriculture-1976", Part XV, published by the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, New Delhi, pp. 298 & 301.

8. Dalip Swamy, *ibid.*

The Real Problem

Through its policies, our government tries to promote economic growth and to accumulate as much national wealth as possible so as to increase the per capita income and the gross national produce. It is almost taken for granted that the economic, political and technocratic elites, in conjunction with their partners in the rich world, are the best agents of the accelerated modernization that has come to be termed "development". This policy has been called "*betting on the strong*". It is also assumed that, in course of time, wealth will flow down to the total population, just as water stored in an over-head tank tends to flow down and saturate the earth.

This unrealistic way of looking at things however ignores the existing socio-economic structure which has built-in mechanisms to prevent the flow of wealth to the population at large. As such, the growth that is achieved cannot reach that sector of the population which needs it most.⁹ The Green Revolution in Punjab in the late sixties brought about a four-fold increase in grain produce, but one discovers at the same time that a number of small farmers have had to sell their land to the big farmers and have joined the ranks of the landless agricultural labourers. Again, at the time of Independence the total amount of grains produced in the country was 50 million tons, and today it is more than 125 million tons, whereas the total population has not increased in the same proportion, and yet the consumption of the lowest 10% of the population decreased by 16% during the very period in which the big thrust in grain production was realized. Finally, during the famine-year of 1966-67 in the north-eastern part of India, especially in the States of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, hundreds of persons died of starvation and thousands of them survived on leaves and roots in the jungles for months; the Indian government imported about 11 million tons of foodgrains that year, the highest amount ever imported into the country in one year. Yet, economists tell us that the country produced 13% surplus foodgrains that year! Where did all the surplus grains go?

In fact, when one comes to think of it, "*poverty is not the real problem of the modern world*, for we have the knowledge and the resources which will enable us to overcome poverty. *The real problem of the modern world—the thing which creates misery, wars and hatred among men—is the division of mankind, into rich and poor.* We can see this division at two levels. Within nation states there are a few individuals who have

9. For details, see John Desrochers, "The Development Debate".

great wealth and whose wealth gives them great power. But the vast majority of the people suffer from varying degrees of poverty and deprivation... And looking at the world as a collection of nation states, we see the same pattern repeated: there are a few wealthy nations which dominate the world economically, and therefore politically; and a mass of smaller and poor nations whose destiny, it appears, is to be dominated."¹⁰

"The reality and depth of the problem arises because *the man who is rich has power over the lives of those who are poor*, and the rich nation has power over the policies of those which are not rich. And, even more important, is that *our social and economic system*, nationally and internationally, *supports these divisions and constantly increases them* so that the rich get ever richer and more powerful, while the poor get relatively ever poorer and less able to control their own future. This continues despite all talk of human equality, the fight against poverty, and of development. Still the rich individuals within nations, and the rich nations within the world go on getting richer very much faster than the poor can overcome their poverty. Sometimes this happens through the deliberate decisions of the rich who use their wealth and their power to that end. But often—perhaps more often—*it happens "naturally" as a result of the normal workings of the social and economic systems men have constructed for themselves*. Just as water from the driest regions of the earth ultimately flows into the ocean where already there is plenty, so wealth flows from poorest nations and the poorest individuals into the hand of those individuals who are already wealthy."¹¹

The normal functioning of the social and economic system involves a tremendous amount of violence. One could indeed speak of human misery as violence. *First of all, there is the violence of internal oppressors*, the phenomenon of internal colonialism: the wealth of a small privileged group is maintained without reference to, and more often than not at the expense of, the misery of millions of their countrymen.¹² The top 4% of rural households own more than 33% of the total area and the lower 44% only 1.59%; the top 2% possess as much as 25% of the rural wealth; and the bottom 20% as little

10. J. K. Nyerere, "So That Man May Be Liberated", in "Seva Vani", vol 5, no 6, p. 8. The italics are ours.

11. *ibid.* The italics are ours.

12. C. G. Arevalo, "The Church on the Side of the Poor", in "Information", Manila, vol 4, no 3, p. 1.

as 0.9%; 20% of India's population can spend less than 50 paise per day... All these are expressions of an internal violence which the rich and powerful of the society are bent upon maintaining.

Secondly, there is the violence present in the relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries. This phenomenon began with colonialism. Two hundred years ago India had the same amount of per capita income as central Europe. In Asia, Africa and Latin America the first European conquerors found highly developed cultures and well-organized political systems situated in social set-ups very different from their own. The colonisers irreparably damaged these traditional social, political and economic systems by imposing their own. Particularly destructive was the western monetary and marketing systems which reduced the colonised countries into suppliers of raw materials to the colonisers. As a result, roughly 85% of the exports of the third world countries to the industrialised ones consists of raw materials even today. Some of the developing countries have one raw material as their sole export asset. Looking at the present state of affairs, one finds that the international monetary and trade systems were devised by the rich nations to suit their own ends and, in many cases, to exploit the poor nations. The capitalistic orientation of the colonial countries reduces human beings into commodities and makes use of international politics and cultural imperialism for its own purposes. On the other hand, socialist super-powers nurture super-militarism, promote wars, and count the individual and his freedom for naught.¹³

*The third form of violence is that exercised by governments which support the former two forms of violence.*¹⁴ This can be done by various means such as government economic policies, inefficient and corrupt administration that sides the rich and the powerful, as well as by direct police or military repression. One can think, in this context, of land reforms and employment policies, falsification of land records by village accountants, taking of bribes in exchange for prompt service and special favours, etc. In the name of law and order, the army and police also often collaborate in the perpetuation of present structures of oppression and injustice. The experience of the Emergency more than proves this point!

In short, the real problem lies in the very structures of our society, which is much more violent than it appears at first sight.

13. *ibid.*

14. *ibid.*

In their restless search for economic profit, people defend private ownership of the means of production, exploit labour through low wages, bring about unemployment by a great concentration of wealth and a certain choice of technology, and try to overpower their competitors in the open market. In this context, justice is practically reduced to obeying the conventions of negotiated contracts within the framework of the law of supply and demand, with no restrictions on individual enterprise. The basic function of the State is to allow free play to the forces of individualism by enforcing public order and the fulfilment of contracts, while remaining neutral as regards their contents.

The Need for Liberation

A relevant involvement in such a situation must necessarily be focussed on the liberation from conditions and forces, systems and structures, which perpetuate and consolidate underdevelopment, dependence and alienation, and thus diminish man. It will also be action for fuller human development, through the free and responsible action of the developing masses themselves. Our human mission is to become a leaven and catalyst in this revolutionary development of the world. This implies prophetic denunciation and action, dissociation from systems and structures of oppression, solidarity with the marginalised and exploited masses, rethinking and reordering of our own structures, involvements and thought-patterns.

Involvement for development should really be an involvement for liberation, for the results of development must reach out to the lower classes. Development therefore means raising the position of the poor so that they can have more power, and not only a higher rate of economic growth. For that, they need to actively participate in the specific programmes leading to their growth by choosing and deciding what is the best for them. It is not only bread that people need, but awareness stemming from their own humanity and sustaining them in life. Poor people need the realization of their humanity even more than material progress. Modernization has no meaning if the small farmers and agricultural labourers cannot get a just share from the harvest. There is no true liberation without changes in the relations between people and land, and among people themselves, for the tremendous disparities in land ownership, income and consumption, negate human liberation. *The goal of our efforts, then, is not only economic*

15. For more details on the working of the capitalist system, see other CSA booklets, especially nos 1, 3, 5, 6 and 9.

growth and eradication of poverty, but more importantly, a change in the structures of society. If this is not achieved, the former benefits will not be a lasting reality for the weaker sections of society. We can even say that a genuine human commitment to liberation necessarily implies *a class option in favour of the workers and the world's most oppressed peoples.* To take the side of the poor ultimately means situating oneself in a different way in the political world. It means *making a revolutionary socialist choice* and assuming a political task in an all-embracing perspective.¹⁶

To be effective, one has to acknowledge the complexity of the composition, organization and day-to-day functioning of society. This necessitates a *scientific understanding.* Such a scientific rationality in political involvement has to do away with an ahistorical dogmatic orientation and busy itself with acquiring the greatest possible knowledge of the private profit mechanisms of capitalist society. Only this knowledge will make action effective. A vague and lyrical summons to defend human dignity, which does not take into account the root causes of the present social order and the necessary conditions for the construction of a just society, leads nowhere. In the long run, it is a subtle way of deceiving and being deceived. Such a scientific rationality is demanding but necessary. *We must therefore become aware* of the economic and socio-cultural factors which have shaped us and *develop a new mentality.* Though difficult, this task is a must. Only this will enable us to give up half-truths like: "It is no use changing social structures if the heart of man is not changed." Such a statement ignores the fact that the "heart" of man also changes when social and cultural structures change, for there is a reciprocal dependence between the structures of society and human awareness.¹⁷

When one openly and devotedly takes the side of the poor and the exploited and commits oneself to the struggle of the proletariat, his social praxis acquires *a conflictive character.* Nowadays, political involvement necessarily involves *confrontations,* in which there are varying degrees of *violence,* between groups of people and between social classes with opposing interests. To be a peacemaker does not excuse one from

16. G. Gutierrez, "Praxis of Liberation and the Christian Faith", in "Justice, Rolling Like a River", CCPD Documentation World Council of Churches, Geneva, Feb. 1975, Document no 6. For a short explanation of socialism, see Appendix 5, and John Desrochers, "Methods of Societal Analysis", pp. 34-41. For details on the envisioned type of socialism, see the CSA booklet, "The India We Want to Build".

17. Gutierrez, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

being present in conflicts, but demands that one takes part in them in order to overcome their root causes; it requires the understanding that *there is no peace without justice*. This is difficult and unsettling for those who prefer not to see conflictive situations or who are satisfied with the application of palliatives. And also for those who, with the greatest goodwill, confuse universal love with fictitious harmony... Our desire to love our "enemies" must recognize the existence of classes and class struggles. The gospel does not ask us not to have any enemies, but not to exclude them from our love. To prefer reconciliation without basic changes to antagonism, evasive eternity to involvement in the contemporary world, can be naivety. *We are challenged to live and think peace in the midst of conflict and to strive for the transcendent in the midst of time.*¹⁸

Liberating action for justice is not either something that is accomplished by the efforts of a few competent, committed, and selfless individuals or groups for the people. It is basically *an achievement of the people*. However, the oppressed are most often incapable of beginning the process of liberation by themselves. For centuries, they have indeed been kept so marginalized that they have frequently come to accept their weakened position and status in society. Having experienced powerlessness throughout their whole life, they cannot be expected to take the initiative to capture power. In such circumstances, poverty has almost become part of their bloodstream and culture. This does not imply that poor people are happy in their poverty, but rather that, having not known any other alternative and having always been at the receiving end, they do not think much about it and live with it.

The friends of the deprived must therefore initiate the process of liberation. As catalysts engaged in an education process, their role is to help grass-root groups to become aware of their situation, to pinpoint the problems and issues that confront them, to realize their basic rights as human beings, and to organize themselves to demand their due. To do this, the catalysts have to identify themselves with the people and their struggles by working with them and sharing, to a great extent, their lives and problems, their poverty included. It is in this way that they can be instrumental in creating a ray of hope in the lives of people.

Though we have not clearly made this distinction so far, the struggle for liberation can be situated either *at the level of social justice or at that of the global transformation of society*. To work for social justice basically means to help ensuring the

18. *ibid.*

rights guaranteed by the Constitution to the citizens of India and fulfilling the obligations of justice towards persons and groups who have been reduced to a weaker position by the functioning of the economic, social and political machinery of the society. It is always a deliberate effort to render particular justice in a specific situation and to make certain goods, services, jobs and functions, more available to the members of the community who suffer on account of unequal and unjust distribution. For this, one must initiate action for justice by taking up particular issues and organizing the oppressed sections of the population to defend their rights. It is clear that such issue-oriented struggles for justice are essential at the local, regional and national levels.

Yet, this alone does not suffice, for injustice is part and parcel of our system. We must therefore change the present structures and usher in a different society, thus removing the very roots of injustice. And this is only possible through the development of a movement which possesses a national perspective and an ideology leading to direct political action. This revolutionary action must be characterized by a thrust towards greater socio-economic equality, people's participation in the decision-making and implementation process, and deliberate focus on the weaker section of society.

A powerful revolutionary action necessarily requires a revolutionary ideology, as the body needs the heart. An ideology is an action-oriented interpretation of man, history and the world. It helps one to understand and change the social situation. It frees people from the captivity of their daily life, provides them with an inspiring vision of the future, and energizes them for collective action. An ideology not only informs and enlightens people, but also motivates them to get things done. Without an ideology, there can be no collective action.¹⁹

But, what kind of an ideology do we need to reach out to the exploited and oppressed sections of our society? The capitalist ideology, which was left behind by the colonisers and taken up by the social and political elites, has led the majority of our fellow countrymen to squalor, misery and helplessness. People filled with idealism and a sense of commitment to the suffering masses of our country must therefore espouse an ideology that puts the premium on relative economic equality, social goals and values, collective planning, and a spirit of cooperation, solidarity and discipline. They must make *a clear option for socialism and a socialist ideology* that will animate their political action. This alone

19. A. Lambinio, "Ideologies", in 'Impact', vol XI, no 11, 1976, p 373.

can enable them to fight the capitalist forces that have succeeded to establish and strengthen themselves in our country.

Political action for liberation can take place in two different set-ups. In certain circumstances, people have still to become aware of their exploitation and to be motivated for joint action through a process of education... During this time-consuming work, catalysts have to identify themselves with the people and patiently enable them to learn the processes of decision-making, planning, organization and action. In other circumstances, the oppressed have become conscious of their rights and have exhausted other possibilities of action... The situation is then ripe to organize them for radical action. This has to be carefully done so that the unavoidable confrontation does not crush them.

Involvement for social justice and direct political action makes us to side with the humanity of the humiliated and oppressed. We become deeply involved in order to liberate the humanity of those whose poverty and powerlessness calls for advocacy and defense. To stand on the side of the poor does not mean to hate the individuals and nations who possess wealth and power, but to take issue with attitudes of selfishness, structures which institutionalize egoisms, economic and political systems which exploit the poor, abuses of power, etc. To stand for the poor, through liberating action in favour of social justice and a socialist society, ultimately means to struggle for the redemption of all men, rich and poor, from their egoisms and injustices. *To work for social justice and socialism is to stand for humanity.*²⁰

The Church in India has undoubtedly to become involved in this process of liberation. When one reads high-sounding official statements in favour of social justice, one really wonders whether the Church fully understands the implication of this involvement and whether it is ready to plunge into action. Before showing, in the last chapter, how the Church can progressively become more faithful to its liberating mission, we shall analyse, in the second and third ones, the tremendous constraints of the institutional Church and its concrete performance in the social field.

20. Arevalo, op cit., pp. 5-6.

Table 1
ACTION FOR LIBERATION

| TYPES OF STRUGGLES | CHARACTERISTICS |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1) For Social Justice (issue-oriented) | * Scientific Understanding of Society |
| 2) For Socialism (structural transformation) | * Social Goals & Values |
| | * Revolutionary Leadership |
| EACH TYPE CAN HAVE 2 PHASES : | * Revolutionary Ideology |
| A: Consciousness-raising | * Conflictive Character |
| B: Organisation | * People's Achievement |

2. Can the Church Play A Liberating Role?

The Church has historically adapted itself to succeeding socio-economic and political systems such as feudalism and capitalism, monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Christianity "became the religion of Rome in its decadence and of the German tribes in the youthful freshness of their civilization, of feudalism as well as of those stages of civilization in which the free cities and later the bourgeoisie have had predominance. Then why may it not also be the religion of the proletariat?"¹ *There is no theoretical reason why the Church could not do the same in a socialist society.* Nowadays, leaders of the Church often express their concern for social justice and liberation. In January 1978, for example, the Bishops of India made a declaration entitled "The Church's Response to the Urgent Needs of the Country."² This concern for social justice is genuine and sincere. Yet, *can the Church in India, at the present juncture, take a revolutionary stand for social justice and socialism?* Can it play a liberating role? The object of this chapter is to study the concrete handicaps and limitations of the Church on account of its institutionalization and situation as a minority group in a capitalist society. This is what we call the inner and outer constraints of the Church. We hope that these pages, far from sounding too pessimistic—our last chapter amply shows that this not our attitude!—will help us to become more realistic and to understand better the obstacles that confront the Church.

The Outer Constraints

We must situate the Church in the Indian social reality. Now, from this point of view, the Church has two complementary characteristics. On the one hand, it is a *minority group* from the religious point of view. Each minority group generally displays a double global attitude at the heart of the society within which it exists: not only do such groups have a

1. Sombart, quoted by O. C. Cox, "Caste, Class & Race", Modern Reader Paperbacks, New York & London, 1970 edition, p. 172.

2. This text can be found in "Vidya jyoti", 1978, pp. 178-83

tendency to live turned in on themselves in an attitude of self-defence, but also to assert themselves to demonstrate their presence visibly by every means in their power. This is a universal sociological characteristic which is found in the Church of India as a whole and in its different religious congregations and associations. On the other hand, the Church exists and functions in the Indian State characterised by certain economic, social, political and cultural systems. No matter how real may be the specific autonomy of the religious system, the (religious) actors will always have a tendency to make it correspond to the other systems so as to be able to exist and act in the totality. *Though structured and organized differently, the Church tends to conform its functioning to the values prevailing in Indian society.*³

"Now if society is a structured totality, there always exists within it a *dominant element* around which and in function of which the others are ordered; and this dominant element tends naturally, from the sociological point of view, to maintain and stabilize the structured totality within which it is inscribed, and to reproduce it through the intermediary of its inter-relations with the other elements... *The dominant element of contemporary Indian society is the economic system of a capitalist type*, controlled by a dynamic, westernized bourgeoisie which is either national or partially dependent."⁴ A small social class has dominated the Indian economic, political, and cultural life since Independence and has led the country towards development along capitalist lines. This group indeed possess both the formal and informal power: formal, for it is the rural and urban economic elite who can capture political power and formulate policies and legislations that suit their ends; informal, for they can inhibit the implementation of reforms and indirectly influence the selection of persons who occupy the positions of formal power.

Though India presents and declares herself as a socialist State, "contemporary Indian society is one which is dominated on the economic level by the capitalist system (more precisely a monopolistic State-capitalistic system with a mixed economy...). On the social, political and cultural levels, society is dominated by systems which are in functional correspondence with the capitalist system (that is, fundamentally functioning in such a way that they express, and

3. F. Houtart, "The Development Projects as a Social Practice of the Catholic Church in India", University of Louvain, 1976, pp. 18-20. In this section on the outer constraints of the Church, I closely follow Houtart's text.

4. *ibid.*, p. 20. The second emphasis is ours.

simultaneously contribute to reproduce, this system). The dominance of the capitalist mode of production in Indian society does not prevent the subsistence of pre-capitalist modes of production with numerous social and cultural characteristics (caste for example) but in a subsidiary and dependent fashion. The social class which exercises this hegemony represents 2 to 3 per cent of the population and, particularly since Independence, has shown an impressive dynamism, which has made India a respected industrial power. But conversely, the social changes which would have been able to effect the development of the whole population have not been brought about."⁵

Within a society structured in this manner, the conditions and the limits of the functioning of a religious system like the Church are reinforced and narrowly circumscribe its field of action. Without the religious institution in its entirety and the religious actors who compose it necessarily being aware of it, it is demanded of them that they exist and act in such a way as not to question fundamentally the Indian social structure as it exists at present, but on the contrary, to contribute to maintain and reinforce it. This structural demand is accordingly greater as the Church is in the minority and can only with difficulty claim to influence in a decisive way the global ideology presiding over the functioning of Indian society in its entirety. It is strengthened also by the fact that the action of the Church in the fields of education and health and, during the last ten years, in that of developmental projects, has been much more influential than its minority number in the nation would indicate.⁶

The structural demand for correspondence are manifested in two ways. At the level of the global functioning of Indian society, the practices and the system of religious meanings have a tendency to correspond to the global conditions of the functioning of Indian society in its present structuration. At the level of functions proper to the religious system, the system of meanings of the religious institution and its socially significant practices will tend to correspond fundamentally to the dominant capitalist ideology. The religious organization and symbolic system of the institutional Church do not indeed evolve in an independent manner, but in close relationship

5. *ibid.*, pp. 21-2. For a discussion of the dominant mode of production, see the CSA booklet "Castes and Social Classes".

6. *ibid.*, p. 22.

with the institutions, meanings and values, of the broader society of which they are a part.⁷

In such circumstances, *it is therefore normal for the Church in India to tend to align its functioning to the overall reality of the country and to capitalism in particular. One understands better, then, the limits within which the Church in India, in spite of the secular character of the State, is placed.* On the one hand, its condition as a religious minority, and on the other hand, its condition as one particular religious system within a society which is fundamentally capitalist, can only specify and further reinforce these limits.⁸ This is why the Church in India usually defends the sacredness of private property and unconditionally upholds the importance of "law and order", while strongly condemning the use of revolutionary violence. This clearly manifests the correspondence between the religious and socio-economic and political systems.

The Inner Constraints

The Church in India is well-organized and institutionalized. What are the consequences of this fact for its liberating mission? To answer this question, we must first of all reflect on the dilemmas that exist in the institutionalization of religion. For this phenomenon constitutes both an asset and a liability for religion. We should indeed keep in mind that "religion both needs most and suffers most from institutionalization. The subtle, the unusual, the charismatic, the supra-empirical, must be given expression in tangible, ordinary and empirical social forms."⁹

In the early phase of a religious movement, followers are characterised by single-minded and whole-hearted response. With institutionalization, there are often *mixed motivations*. There indeed "arises a structure of offices—of statuses and roles—capable of eliciting another kind of motivation, involving needs for prestige, expression of teaching and leadership abilities, drives for power, aesthetic needs and the quite prosaic wish for the security of a respectable position in the professional structure of the society."¹⁰ Institutionalization

7. *ibid.*, p. 23. For details on the impact of society on the religious organization and the symbolic system, see pp. 24-30.

8. *ibid.*, p. 21.

9. O'Dea Thomas, "Sociology and the Study of Religion", Basic Books, New York, 1970, p. 244.

10. *ibid.*

has its impact on *acts of worship* as well. On the one hand, in order to perpetuate the charismatic moment, worship must become stabilized in established forms and procedures. Thus ritual develops, presenting to the participant an objectified symbolic order of attitude and response to which he is to conform his own interior disposition... Such objectification is a prerequisite for common and continuous worship, for without it prayer would be individual and ephemeral. On the other hand, however, this whole process can go so far that symbols and rituals become cut off from the subjective experience of the worshippers. This may easily lead to routinization, and even to a sacredness that thrives on obscurity and mysteriousness, a situation conducive to the development of semi-magical or magical attitudes.¹¹

Under institutionalization, the *leadership* also acquires a rational-legal structure made up of a chief and an administrative staff. Bureaucracy appears along with the necessary emergence of statuses and roles in a complex of offices. All this risks to produce an unwieldy organisation with blocks and breakdowns in communication, overlapping of spheres of competence, and ambiguous definitions of authority and related functions. Vested interests often increase so much that even genuine organizational reforms become threatening to the status, security and self-validation of the incumbents in office.¹² *The letter of the law* moreover frequently replaces its spirit. While the import of religion must be translated into terms that are relevant and practical for everyday life, institutionalization may express the high call of an ethical message in a narrow set of do's and don'ts that paves the way for petty conformity to rules.¹³ Finally, while personal *conversion* should mark the beginning of one's religious life, institutionalization too often turns religion into a mere socializing and educational process, and that even to the extent of substituting external pressures for interior conviction.¹⁴

The rather strong and rigid institutionalization of the Church in India undoubtedly creates severe handicaps for its liberating mission. It raises several pertinent questions. How can such a Church be sensitive enough, and flexible enough, to answer the urgent needs of the country? How can its bureaucratic and administrative structures permit its personnel to be involved in struggles for social justice and social transformation? Can the

11. *ibid.*, pp. 245-7.

12. *ibid.*, pp. 247-8.

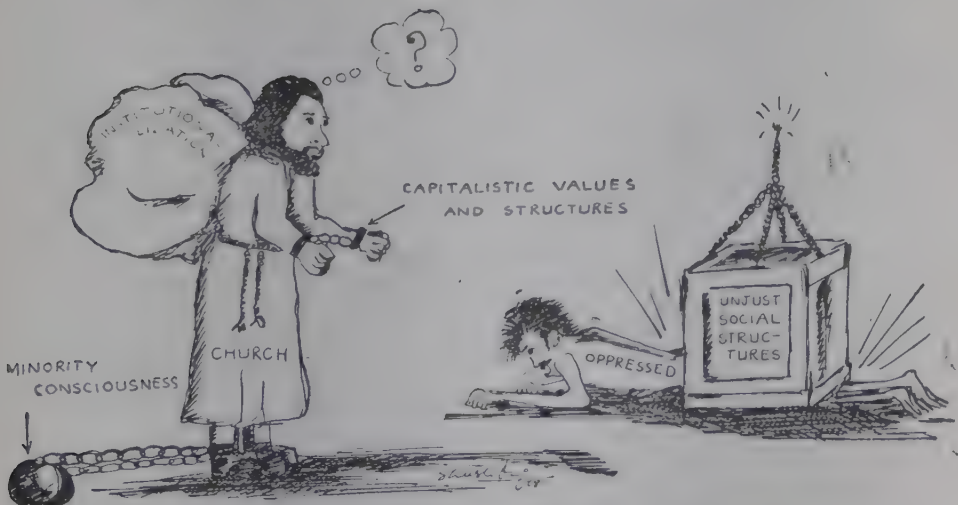
13. *ibid.*, p. 249.

14. *ibid.*, pp. 249-51.

Indian Church concretely make use of its resources in man and money to give a single-minded and whole-hearted response to today's situation? Are not most members of the hierarchy too concerned about the prestige, position and power of the Church—and their own—to take the side of the oppressed and get involved in controversial issues? Are not most leaders of the Church—bishops, priests, some religious and lay people—too secure in their sheltered life to experience the poverty and injustices that would lead them to action? In fact, is the cry of the poor in them? How many of these leaders possess a proper understanding of society and a revolutionary ideology? Still more, how many have the moral courage to oppose socio-economic and political exploitation and to denounce corruption and oppression? Or to dare to confront, without compromise, the rich and the powerful and to antagonise them? In short, can the institutionalized Church in India take a bold stand in favour of the values of the gospel and play its prophetic and liberating role?

It must unfortunately be recognized that, in spite of their good will, most of the lay and religious leaders of the Church face tremendous handicaps in becoming agents of liberation. In their 1971 declaration entitled "Justice in the World", the Synod of Bishops spoke of "a set of injustices which constitute the nucleus of today's problem and whose solution requires the undertaking of tasks and functions in every sector of society, and even on the level of the global society". They

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added: "Therefore we must be prepared to take on new functions and new duties in every sector of world society, if justice is really to be put into practice."¹⁵ *The sad truth is that most of the leaders of the Church are ill-prepared, by their rather enclosed training and life-style, and their past involvements, to face the modern world and to assume these new functions and duties in favour of liberation.* In practice, the existing institutions, customs, and experiences of the institutionalized Church by far outweigh the demands of social justice.

In this chapter, I have realistically described the outer and inner constraints of the Church in India. How can the Church cope with this situation and live the gospel? Is there any solution? Yes, there is. But, before coming to this point in the last chapter, I will now assess the work of the Church in the social field.

15. III Synod, "Justice in the World", Part I, section 2.

3. The Church's Social Involvement

In this chapter, I shall make a sociological survey of the Church's involvement in the social field under three headings: elite institutions, new efforts in community health, and socio-economic development.

Elite Institutions

The Church's educational and health institutions, which cater mainly to the socially and economically privileged sections of society, can be termed "elite institutions". Our so-called "Cambridge" and English-medium schools, our prestigious colleges, and most of our urban hospitals, fall in this category. If it is true that the overall educational system favours the upper castes and classes of society, how much more it is the case with these elite educational institutions! If modern hospitals, "with their ever-growing need for staff and sophisticated equipments", have been called "disease palaces" organized "not for the promotion of health but for the unlimited application of 'disease technology' to the affluent sections of society",¹ what shall we say of the comparatively better-off Church's hospitals?

Elite educational institutions are usually justified on the ground that they give the "best possible education" to the privileged and thus train them as "future leaders" who will transform society. This is at best a myth. And a myth that needs to be exploded! Where are the graduates of these institutions? How many of them are truly involved in struggles for social justice and societal transformation? *Let us face the facts: they clearly contradict our justifications!* Most of our graduates are indeed busy improving their socio-economic positions in the cities of India, if they have not migrated to more affluent countries....

1. This is the view of Dr. Gunaratne, the Regional Director of World Health Organization. On this, see the article, "Self-Perpetuating Distortion", in "The Hindu", Sept 6, 1978, p. 7.

Nowadays, it is also widely recognized that it is hardly possible to serve the poor through modern urban hospitals. In India 90% of the rural poor who fall ill do not have access to hospitals... They must therefore have recourse to the services of traditional, often unscientific medical practitioners or, worse, to local magicians and faith-healers. With its heavy emphasis on curative measures, the hospital set-up is not conducive to meaningful preventive health care either. At its 1973 annual meeting, the Christian Medical Commission clearly admitted that "the traditional hospital-based approaches have been both *ineffective* and *inefficient*". It is ineffective in meeting the total needs of people, for hospitals do not even succeed to significantly improve the health standards of the surrounding population. Inefficiency is also evident in the use of time within the hospital. Clinical care being considered the doctor's preserve, routine treatment cannot be handed over to auxiliary personnel, although it has been demonstrated that they can care for 90% of illnesses as effectively as physicians. Again, the elaborate hospital facilities are designed more to serve the professional convenience of overly busy physicians than the well-being of patients. Still more seriously, the people are not given the education that would permit them to take care of their own health problems. They cannot even be given the compassionate listening time needed to unburden their psychological problems and fears. *The most serious indictment of this system is its injustice, for it does not equitably allocate the scarce health resources.*² The more modern and "advanced" is the hospital, the more these features are accentuated!

In its 1978 declaration, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India asked the Church's educational and health institutions to reach out and serve the poor. The Bishops declared: "We must constantly evaluate our traditional institutions so that they become genuine witnesses to the Church's concern for the building of a just society, and thus effective instruments of social change."³ They further expressed the wish that "our educational institutions, particularly those catering to the more privileged classes, should become agents of social change and find ways and means to educate the students towards social awareness and concern for the less privileged."⁴

2. "Position Paper on Health Care and Justice", in "Contact", no 16, August 1973, pp. 3-5. The emphasis is ours.

3. "The Church's Reponse...", op. cit., p. 182.

4. *ibid.*

In fact, it is hardly possible to reorientate elitist institutions so that they serve the poor and become instruments of social justice. Once we have built a prison, we can hardly speak of liberation. And the Church's elitist institutions are like beautiful prisons built at great cost. Even if, as the Bishops requested, sincere efforts are made towards "non-formal education and adult literacy" and "preventive and promotive aspects of health care", the results will remain very limited, for the required reorientation is much more drastic. In truth, *it is not elitist institutions that have to be re-oriented, but rather the personnel, who have to become more attuned to the socio-economic and political conditions of our country.* To reorientate their efforts, the persons concerned should progressively free themselves from elitist institutions, live in closer contact with the people to whom they wish to render service and discover with them how a relevant type of education and health care can be organized.

Table II describes various types of Church's institutions and their relationship with the overall society. Elitist institutions can be called "prefabricated", for they essentially continue certain forms of services that originated long ago in a very different context to answer specific needs. In spite of their efforts to be modern, these institutions transpose into today's world certain structures that were perhaps meaningful in the past. Consciously or not, *their personnel are turned towards the past and aim at preserving these elitist institutions,* which have become the cherished heritage of several religious congregations. Traditions in education and health services have become deeply ingrained in the psychological make-up of these religious institutes. The "charism of the founder or foundress" is often interpreted as, and almost identified with, outdated needs, approaches and forms of services. In the process, these congregations lose sight of the new needs and approaches that have developed. They forget that, today, they would never think of starting such institutions to serve the poor and promote social justice... This is the weight of institutions !

While having close contacts with the upper classes, "pre-fabricated institutions" are *isolated* from the majority of the people and their socio-economic and cultural life. One has only to observe a few of their cultural and recreational programmes and to be attentive to the views and preoccupations of their inmates to realise that these institutions remain outside the mainstream of society. They moreover reinforce the existing structures of exploitation by *their insistence on values such as social prestige, material success and efficiency, profit-making and competition, attainment of positions of power,* etc. Such institutions are naturally upheld as models by the

Table II
Types of Institutions and Their Relationship With Society

| Types of Institutions | Aims | Relation With Society | Fundamental Values |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|
| "Prefabricated" | Self-Preservation (turned towards the past) | Isolation from the underprivileged and the mainstream of society Identification with the affluent | Tradition Security High Standards Elitism |
| "Reformist" or "dragging" | Self-Preservation and Service of the underprivileged (past & present) | Wider contacts with the affluent Limited contacts with the underprivileged | Experimentation & Adaptation More sensitive & flexible to Human needs |
| "Developmentalist" | Improvement within the established system (present & past) | Wider contacts with the underprivileged | Economic Growth Harmony & Peace Unity |

capitalist society which thrives on the same values. These prestigious institutions are understandably in great demand among the rich, who flock to them and thus proclaim their importance and service to society. Such institutions moreover like to remember *their past successes and glorious traditions* and think of perpetuating them instead of facing the present—especially the conditions of the masses. Their whole set-up attaches much more importance to elitist values, the security and glory of the past, the maintenance of high academic and disciplinary standards, the respect of authority, the prompt response to the desires of the affluent, than to an ever more faithful service of the oppressed. Some of these elitist institutions make sizeable profits every year and can thus expand, for the use of those who can afford them, their facilities. Yet, ironically enough, they claim to be charitable agencies and avoid paying taxes...

In spite of the good intentions of their personnel, elitist institutions cannot become effective instruments of social justice and social transformation. They cannot enable the Church to assume a meaningful role in the present-day Indian society. As they themselves are part of the society's dehumanizing structures, their functioning reinforces rather than weakens socio-economic, political and cultural inequalities. As long as the Church is saddled with these institutions, which absorb so much of its energy and resources for the pseudo-elite, it can only pay lip-service to the cause of liberation. Elitist institutions are much more a liability than an asset.

New Efforts Towards Community Health

In their 1978 declaration, the Bishops of India spoke of the need of re-orientating the Church's medical work as follows: "We want our health services to take primary health care to the masses, particularly in the rural and urban slums. *Catholic hospitals and dispensaries should stress the preventive and promotive aspects of health care...* Our health outreach programmes may demand a change in the routine especially of religious communities of men and women involved in this work..."⁵

The Christian Medical Commission had already been much more elaborate in 1973. After its review of the ineffectivity and injustice of the traditional hospital-based approaches, the Commission announced certain *clear guidelines to avoid discrimination in the field of health care*. Instead of spending all

5. op. cit., p. 182. The emphasis is ours.

our resources on those who spontaneously come to our hospitals, we must first of all "work out new ways of defining and providing *a basic minimum of services for all*. The definition of this basic minimum must be locally derived and strictly limited to ensure coverage'. We must also "*set and follow priorities in care*. The purpose is to focus on the measures that will do the most for particularly vulnerable groups." This effort must combine technical understanding with community participation in planning so that people are helped to solve their own problems. The institutional environment should moreover be careful not to discriminate against the families most in need of social and psychological support. Since health is essentially connected with other human problems, the personnel involved in health care can no longer afford to work in isolation but *must join hands with those working in the economic and political sectors of community life*, thus striving towards the total development of the whole person.⁶

Finally, the Christian Medical Commission commits itself to respond to these challenges. The conclusion of its report reads as follows:

"1. We share in a call to openness, to new visions and insight and a daring readiness to explore complex relationships at the interface between science and human values.

2. The challenge to individuals is that in our daily working setting and relationships we must make our part of the action more just in allocating more equitably those resources we control. But we have to start where we are and use what we have as we move incrementally to innovation.

3. The corporate challenge is that we review critically the justness of the health system as a whole. This does not mean condemning or discarding the means and understanding that have contributed so much in the past. We can now build on the past with our new insights, just as those in the future will build more just systems as today's justice becomes tomorrow's injustice. We justify this call in the belief that there is no force as aggressive yet as healing as love."⁷

6. "Position Paper on Health Care...", op. cit., p. 5. The emphasis is ours.

7. *ibid.*, p. 6.

One is certainly impressed with the desire of some of the Christian medical personnel to rectify the present dehumanizing hospital set-ups. Given the dedication and selfless service that typify many of them, and the relatively greater freedom that health institutions enjoy compared to schools, one may hope that Christian hospitals will make some headway in their new efforts. Yet, how much can they achieve? One has indeed to realise that, in spite of their attempts at promoting community health, *hospitals are basically organized to provide curative services in a specialised, costly, and therefore unequal and unjust set-up.*⁸ In the late sixties and the seventies, numerous seminars and articles have helped us to realize the importance of preventive and educational health measures. Much has also been said about people's participation in health programmes, the organization of a decentralized and referral system, and the need for an integral approach in which health specialists work in close collaboration with people who focus their attention on the economic, political and cultural dimensions of life... But, how much of this can be done in a hospital? It is high time that we realise that *community health programmes have to be inserted in a very different set-up.*⁹ Once such health centres exist at the local level, hospitals will be able to perform their true function, namely, specialized curative medicine and surgery

In their efforts to change, some Christian hospitals—and the same can be said of educational institutions that adopt similar measures—have become “*reformist*” or, if I may use the expression, “*dragging*”. Though acknowledging their limitations and the social repercussions of their work, their personnel indeed remain satisfied with half-measures and “*drag their feet*” towards improvement. *They somewhat hesitate between the past and the present.* They want, on one hand, to keep their traditional hospital set-up—which corresponds quite well to the composition, training and organization of their religious institute—and make it serve purposes for which it was not created. For hospitals are not geared towards community health any more than the present educational system is towards social awareness. And they want, on the other hand, to answer the basic medical needs of the most deprived people through the more efficient

8. See above, p. 24.

9. Whenever religious institutes tried to act on this insight, the Church's response has been less than enthusiastic so far.. In one instance, the transfer of a prestigious hospital to the government was stopped on the ground that it is important for the Church to keep such a “good hospital”. In other cases, other religious communities took over... and the system continued! One could call this “passing the buck”.

and up-to-date community health approach. Seeing the material, cultural, and psychological difficulties of the poor with traditional hospitals, they desire to reach out to them and thus invent various kinds of concessions and new programmes for them. Then appear "free wards", "free beds", "reductions", "reservations", special departments, extension teams, mobile or not! etc. These initiatives are soon discussed and imitated by the personnel of other hospitals....

"Reformist" institutions are keen on *experimentation and adaptation*. In their desire to bring health to people in their life-situation, hospitals acquire one or more ambulances (usually with foreign money), appoint one or more doctors and some nurses, adopt some nearby villages and visit them once or twice a week. Free medicine is generally discouraged and people are encouraged to "pay something". Patients who need hospitalization are brought to the hospital where they are given more or less free admission. Some medical groups also include certain elements of health education in their programmes: hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, causes of common ailments, etc. To render health still more accessible, a few organizations train some local girls or women to educate and care for their own people. In this way, the hospital set-up is being "adapted" to serve the needs of nearby villages and slums. While keeping their relationship with the privileged, such health institutions thus develop *genuine, but limited contacts with the poor and the oppressed. In the process, their values somewhat change.* They become more human and

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concerned for the poor, their awareness of the root causes of health problems grow, their openness to new life-styles and forms of service increase, etc. A certain degree of flexibility appears. All these changes are certainly for the better.

Though positive, the results of these efforts remain rather limited. City hospitals cannot indeed reach the interior and most needy villages. On account of their very different life-style and part-time involvement, the hospital personnel are still basically cut off from the people. This life-link being absent, they cannot be efficient agents of liberation in the socio-economic, political, and cultural fields. In fact, it can almost be said that *these new efforts towards community health bear fruit to the very extent that they become free from a hospital set-up*. The most positive aspect of these efforts therefore lies in the fact that the medical personnel may realise the limitations of the hospital approach and look for more relevant measures.

Socio-Economic Development

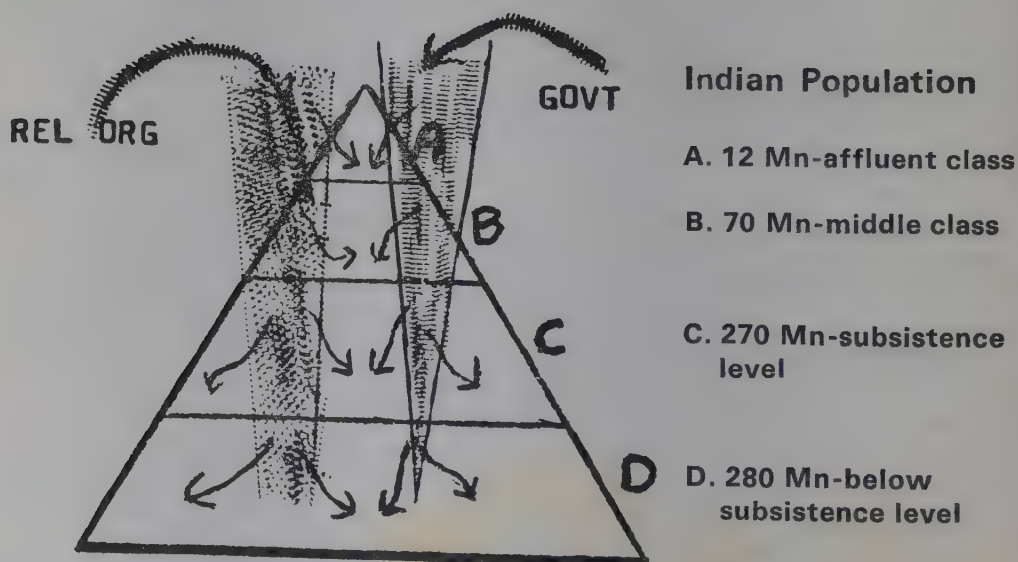
Till 10 or 15 years ago, the presence of the Church in society was mainly envisioned in terms of educational and health institutions. Nowadays, the emphasis is changing, for the Church is undertaking more and more socio-economic projects with the purposes of raising the income of the people and providing job opportunities. In fact, the number of such projects has increased more than 4 times during the last 10 years. Let us now assess the relevance of these efforts at socio-economic development.

In 1973, Brig. Nazareth made some interesting observations on "The Optimal Utilization of Economic Aid". He raised important issues on the role of religious organizations. The major question, according to him, is *whether they use aid "to the best advantage"*? For one thing, most of the clergy and religious are unable to plan projects scientifically and to implement them in a business-like fashion. Because of their 'Father Christmas' image, they even find it difficult to recover loans from beneficiaries. For another thing, the projects sponsored are paternalistic in their approach and highly centralized. There is not much people's participation. Even though they may gain material benefits, the poor are neither trained nor induced to help themselves, but are made to become more and more dependent on the clergy and the religious.¹⁰ It should also be added that the Church's development efforts, to a very great extent, distribute foreign money. All in all, it almost seems that the Church's slogan is: "Development through Dependency"!

10. In "Partnership in Planned Development", Extension Service, Indian Social Institute, Delhi, 1974, pp. 96-8.

Brig. Nazareth continues as follows: "Although the clergy are committed to the service of the poor, they are members of a religious organization, and to achieve their aims they tend to acquire the means for doing so, and incidentally enrich their own organizations. We thus have a spate of projects for the expansion of schools, colleges, hospitals, congregation houses and institutes of various kinds run by religious men and women, tailoring classes and vocational training-centres... A statistical analysis shows that over 66% of the projects submitted are designed to expand existing facilities, that serve to enlarge institutions... *It is also questionable whether a religious institution which is enriched, serves the poor better.* As it moves up the rungs of affluence it tends more and more to serve the social level which is its new milieu. It may have started as a hospital or a school to serve the poor, but with each grandiose expansion, it needs more and more money to maintain itself. This it can only get from the rich for whom it must now cater, lest it topple under its own weight. The service to the poor at this stage becomes a perfunctory conscience saving gesture."¹¹

Table III¹²
The Beneficiaries of Economic Aid



11. *ibid.*, p. 98. C. T. Kurien also pointed out that development programmes operated with foreign resources are used more to the advantage of Church-related institutions than to that of the people in dire need ("Towards a New Development Strategy", in "Study Encounter" Vol 8 no 3, WCC, Geneva, 1972, p. 9). On this see Houtart, "The Development Projects...", *op. cit.*, p. 91.

12. Adapted from Nazareth, pp. 95 & 100. The population figures are approximate.

Table III illustrates what happens to the economic aid which is channelled through religious organizations and Government Agencies. The diagram divides the Indian population into 4 strata (A,B,C,D), the last comprising mainly marginal farmers, landless labourers and unemployed workers. The diagram moreover clearly shows that the aid given through religious organizations reaches the poor more than government aid. Yet, *most of the aid that the religious organizations utilize still remains among the three upper strata*, which also represent their socio-economic background.

Nazareth thus concludes. "A summary of our conclusions on the flow of aid when projects are sponsored by religious organizations is as follows:-

- (a) There is a large seepage of aid at different levels of the economic structure, and a small portion of it reaches the people for whom it is intended—those who exist below the subsistence level.
- (b) The greatest seepage takes place in *enlarging the institutional and material structures of religious organizations*.
- (c) *The aid* that does reach the starving millions *does not generally promote their self-development*, but is directed towards alleviating their suffering, with the religious organizations in the paternalistic role.
- (d) As religious organizations get rich, they move up the ladder of affluence, and to maintain themselves, they have now to cater to *the requirements of the rich*: service to the poor is relegated to a subordinate role.
- (e) In expanding their promotion of welfare activities the religious organizations, rather than supplement the work of other social organizations, tend to supplant them and strangle them out of existence; this they are able to do because of their greater efficiency and devotion to their work.
- (f) The projects sponsored by the religious, because of lack of management expertise, are generally wasteful in concept and implementation; this again results in a seepage of funds."¹³

13. *ibid.*, pp. 99-100. The emphasis is ours.

Basing himself on the reports of the 10 principal foreign development Agencies in India, acting within the framework of the Catholic Church, F. Houtart reviewed about 6,700 "projects for development", realized during the period 1968-73. About Rs 500 million were invested in this development action. If all these projects would have taken place in different places, about 1.15% of the villages of India would have been reached. Though this figure is most likely over-estimated, these projects are said to have benefitted 25 million people, or 4.57% of the country's population.¹⁴

More than 68% of the socio-economic projects and 80% of the Food for Work Programmes were rural.¹⁵ In the case of projects, these main types of activity predominated: those connected with production (27.5% and 7.5% respectively dealt with agriculture undertakings and animal husbandry, dairies and fisheries, and 13.9% with training-cum-production centres), with social welfare (13.8%) and the two Traditional Sectors of Church activity, namely education (11.6%) and health (13.6%). Activities more closely connected with socio-political realities represented less than 5%. Food for Work Programmes were still more centred on production (agriculture: 56.6%; transport and communications, especially roads: 14.4%; and housing: 13.5%).¹⁶ *There has therefore been an evident shift of emphasis from traditional patterns (welfare, education and health) to new ones centred on economic development and overall improvement of living conditions. Little attention has however been given to the formation of social leadership.*¹⁷

It is also interesting to compare the practices of the Church and Government in the development sector. *Both the Government and the Church greatly emphasized economic objectives and neglected the social and socio-political perspectives.* We have already shown the insufficiency of this approach in the first chapter. The Church's practice however differed by giving more emphasis to agriculture than industry, by paying a little more attention to social leadership, and by reaching out more to the rural lower middle class—almost half the projects are carried out to the benefit of the rural intermediary strata —

14. "The Development Projects..", op. cit., pp. 312-3.

15. *ibid.*, pp. 56-8.

16. *ibid.*, pp. 45-9.

17. *ibid.*, pp. 90-1.

and even to the poorer strata of society. This is clearly shown in Table IV.¹⁸ In this way, *the Church did a modest suppletive*

Table IV. The Beneficiaries

| Forms of action | Welfare/assistance projects | | Socio-economic projects | | Total | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Beneficiaries | No. | % | No. | % | Nó. | % |
| Coolies | 350 | 29.5 | 676 | 16.8 | 1,026 | 19.7 |
| Tribes | 48 | 4.0 | 273 | 6.8 | 321 | 6.1 |
| Small farmers | 91 | 7.7 | 1,653 | 41.1 | 1,744 | 33.5 |
| Village people | 483 | 40.7 | 544 | 13.5 | 1,027 | 19.7 |
| Fishermen | 8 | 0.7 | 36 | 0.9 | 44 | 0.8 |
| Workers | 2 | 0.2 | 22 | 0.5 | 24 | 0.5 |
| Social cases | 147 | 12.4 | 546 | 13.6 | 693 | 13.3 |
| Institutions | 57 | 4.8 | 275 | 6.8 | 332 | 6.4 |
| Total | 1,186 | 100.0 | 4,025 | 100.0 | 5,211 | 100.0 |

*work.*¹⁹ Yet, the Church's involvement hardly tried to face the main issues of consciousness-raising and organization of the masses.

With regard to the planning and implementation of these projects, about 3000 out of 9,151 priests in India, 600 out of 33,456 sisters, and 400 laymen out of 8 million catholics, have taken the initiative. As normal, these social agents were deeply influenced by the social system in which they live, namely the organizational structures and ideology of the Catholic Church. One of the fundamental characteristics of the Church is to operate at the *micro-social* level. First, the Church's action usually "has as its object *persons* taken individually or in their immediate and daily interpersonal relations. At most, it will reach the dimension of the parish, the village or the urban neighbourhood. In the second place, this action is directed towards and takes account of the *intentions* of the persons, that is, of the immediately

18. *ibid.*, p. 280. Houtart further observes that the Church's socio-economic projects "contribute to giving a greater economic and social power to rural groups which are relatively less underprivileged (compared to landless peasants, harijans..., fishermen and tribals)", while the most underprivileged rural groups benefit more from welfare measures which cannot give a greater economic and socio-political power (p. 283).

19. *ibid.* pp. 303-310.

perceptible meaning of their attitudes, their behaviour and their practices.'²⁰ Since these priests and sisters were primarily shaped by this pastoral orientation, they mainly carry out their development work at the micro-level. This first of all means a geographically limited involvement and, still more importantly, "a *fragmented and fragmentary* action, the result of local and circumstantial initiatives and ideas without any strict relation or coordination between them." Much of this action is furthermore a response to immediate needs and privations and fully lacks the perspectives proper to a long-range, planned, transforming action which alone can act upon the causes and roots of under-development.²¹

In keeping with the logic of "pastoral action", the *leadership* in developmental action remains essentially ecclesiastical and is closely linked to religious institutions and organizations. The combination of the religious, social and economic aspects of leadership explains why the majority of the projects function in an *isolated* and *autocratic* manner, and are often referred to as the "projects of the parish or convent". In this way, projects appear as the natural prolongation of pastoral action. Everything takes place as if development projects "did not require particularized reflection, specific analysis, special preparation: any priest, religious or sister of good will, who has perceived certain needs or deficiencies among the population of his parish, can undertake a development project in the same way that he initiates any other programme in liturgical or catechetical matters". The need is not therefore felt for "a *permanent and specific organ to carry out a systematic reflection* upon the developmental practices of the church."²² Finally, the *channels of communication* of development agencies, also tend to be the usual *institutional religious channels*. This does not give much leeway to reach out to people who are not in close contact with our religious institutions and leaders.²³

In so far as they orient themselves towards this type of socio-economic development, the institutions of the Church can be called "*developmentist*". At that stage, their personnel are turned both towards *the present and the past*. They have certainly become aware of the terrible poverty of present-day India and encourage the use of modern science and technology to increase its production and thus alleviate its suffering. Yet,

20. *ibid.*, pp. 313-5.

21. *ibid.*, pp. 315-6.

22. *ibid.*, pp. 316-9.

23. *ibid.*, pp. 320-1.

they remain *prisoners of the traditional understanding of poverty and underrate the importance of structures and conflicts in society. They thus fail to uncover the root causes of the poverty they fight.* In their service of the poor, they constantly strive to avoid confrontation and pin their hopes on the unity of the community and its harmonious and peaceful development. *They stand by these values and promote both welfare and development programmes within the present system.* With concern and

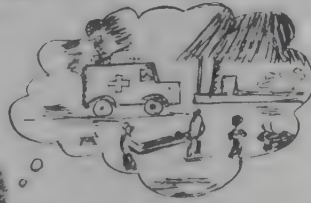
THE CHURCH CAN
BUSY ITSELF
WITH ELITE SECTIONS
OF SOCIETY AND
THINK IT IS DOING A
FINE JOB...



THAT IS THE ELITIST
CHURCH

1

THE CHURCH CAN
FIND OUT WHAT
IS WRONG
AND TRY TO IMPROVE
THE EXISTING
SYSTEM...



... THAT IS THE
"DRAGGING" CHURCH

2

THE CHURCH CAN
WORK FOR ECONOMIC
GROWTH, HOPING THAT
NATIONAL WEALTH
WILL GRADUALLY SEEP
DOWN TO THE TOTAL
POPULATION ...



THAT IS DEVELOPMENTIST
CHURCH

3

THE CHURCH CAN BE
A PROPHETIC AGENT
OF LIBERATION, AND
EXPRESS ITS SOLIDARITY
WITH THOSE WHO
STRUGGLE AGAINST
OPPRESSION.



THAT'S THE REAL
CHURCH

4

Sketch

generosity, they offer their professional services to the underprivileged along with their time and hard work. They are very busy in "doing" and "managing" things for others, creating various islands of well-being, and sometimes considering themselves as "saviours". If they do not always put forward these theories explicitly, it is at least what their social practice implies. In their technological and peaceful approach to progress, they belong to the "developmentist" school.

Though undoubtedly and urgently required, *socio-economic development does not answer all, nor the most important, needs of our country*. The most fundamental problem of the oppressed sections of society has indeed to be tackled through struggles for social justice and societal transformation. If this work of liberation is not done, the Church will have to continue its "developmentist" approach for hundreds of years, for the lowest 50% of the Indian population will not improve much and will always need help....

If this chapter is rather critical of the Church's present social involvement, it is not that I question the good will, sincerity, and hard work of its personnel. It is rather because I have assessed the Church's work against the need for liberation. If one takes stock, as we did in the second chapter, of the Church's institutionalization, its minority consciousness and insertion into the Indian capitalist society, one is not surprised that the Church's social involvement took the orientations and forms that we have just analysed. Yet, the Church can progressively learn to be much more relevant and to play its liberating role. In the last chapter, I shall consider how this can be done.

IV. Towards A Liberating Church

Till now, the Church in India has been, to a very great extent, caught up in the limitations that result from its heavy institutionalization, minority consciousness, and insertion into the prevalent capitalist society. For its action, the Church has therefore adopted an integrative model of development which understands development as the result of individual efforts, which integrate everyone in a peaceful and harmonious process of economic growth without altering the present socio-economic and political structures of society.¹ Though occasionally involved in social justice issues, the Church in India has shown almost no awareness of the structural causes of inequality and consequently of the broader political implications of social justice and of the need for socialism. In spite of this situation, I would now like to explain my *hope for the future* and, then, speak of *the liberating Church* I envision. I will finally add a few words about *the process of growth* of this more relevant Church.

Hope For the Future

Though the handicaps are severe and the road ahead far from easy, the Church in India is not condemned to its present forms of action. My hope for the future lies in the possibility of change. The religious system indeed possesses a good degree of autonomy in society. The evangelical message, in particular, can give spiritual liberty, inspire prophetic attitudes and actions, and bring about structural changes inside the ecclesiastical institution and its approach to the world.² For the weight of oppressive structures and dominant ideas and values "has not succeeded in stopping the liberating dynamic of the Gospel".³ This possibility of change is brought out by recent developments in the Church, especially in Latin America and the Philippines.

1. F. Houtart, "Religion and Development in Asia", Baguio Feres Seminar, Philippines, 1976, pp. 77-8.

2. *ibid.*, p. 78.

3. "Christians for Socialism", Quebec, 1975, Final Statement, no 23 (see Appendix 1).

From the times of "Rerum Novarum" (Leo XIII, 1891),⁴ the Catholic hierarchy "stood for the workers in their grievances, but with capitalism as the framework for a solution". This liberal and reformist policy took shape in Western Europe and Latin America through the Church's unofficial political vehicle, the Christian Democratic Party. It became popular in the mid-20th century. During the Cold War, anti-communism and the Church's association with the new middle classes however grew. Later on and progressively, there was *a threefold opening to the left: the diplomatic overtures* of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, who received communist leaders in the Vatican and encouraged theological dialogue with marxists; *the pragmatic collaboration* of Christian Democratic Parties, which somewhat turned towards Center-Left Coalitions with Russian-oriented Communist parties in Latin America and Western Europe; and the *more radical Church's social movements* such as Young Christian Workers, Young Christian Students, and especially "Christians for Socialism". After the failure of various attempts at finding a third path of development between capitalism and socialism in Latin America, the movement "Christians for Socialism" was founded by Catholic priests in Chile in 1972 in support of the Allende experiment. It quickly spread across Latin America and the rest of the world, especially in the Philippines and Southern Europe. A congress of 6000 members was recently held in Italy. This movement, which claims to be both Christian and Marxist, promotes the socialist ideology in the Church and collaborates with various revolutionary movements to establish a "socialism with a human face" in the world. It represents the radical strain in the Christian-Marxist dialogue.⁵

Latin America

Traditional society in Latin America rested on three pillars: the army, the landed aristocracy, and the Church. Yet, in the 1960s, a wind of change blew in the Church and showed that "the drug of religion, decried by Marx as the opium of the people, might have an explosive rather than a soporific effect."⁶ Many publications on "theology of liberation"

4. The other great social encyclicals are "Quadragesimo Anno" (Pius XI, 1931), "Mater et Magistra" and "Pacem in Terris" (John XXIII, 1961 & 1963), and "Populorum Progressio" (Paul VI, 1967).

5. For this paragraph, see J. Holland, "Marxism Deserves a Catholic Hearing", in "New Catholic World", Sept/Oct 1975.

6. R. Gott, in his introduction to Alain Gheerbrant, "The Rebel Church in Latin America", Penguin Books, 1974, pp. 9-13. Gheerbrant has published here many important Christian documents on Latin America.

appeared, including several declarations made by the hierarchy and large groups of priests. Still more importantly, *several leaders of the Church and Christian groups became significantly involved in day-to-day people's struggles against economic exploitation and military repression*. One immediately thinks of Archbishops Helder Camera and Oscar Romero y Galdames, Bishop Antonio Frago and others, who are taking a strong stand in the name of the official Church, and of Camilo Torres, Nestor Paz, etc., who laid down their lives for their people; and also of persons like Paulo Freire, Gustavo Gutierrez, Hugo Assmann, Juan Segundo, and Juan Ellorio, who are mainly carrying out the ideological struggle. The commitment of militant Christians to liberation indeed found its expression in everyday life: "Dominican priests in Brazil offer sanctuary to urban guerillas; Protestant missionaries in Uruguay actively support the Tupamaros;... priests issue public ultimatums to their religious superiors urging them to return church-owned lands to Bolivian peasants or to reject government subsidies for their schools. Such activists openly accept all political risks: suppression, jail, torture, exile, even assassination."⁷

In 1968, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Latin America held the now famous Medellin Conference in which "*they declared their independence, denouncing 'institutionalized violence'.... and vowing to campaign against 'injustices and excesses of power'*". Medellin swiftly became a synonym for progressive action—and frequently radicalism—in the Latin American church. Under the banner of the "theology of liberation", many priests, nuns and lay people used an unusual synthesis of Marxian economic analysis and biblical theology to align the church with the continent's poor. The theology has had its price: for trying to put it into practice, more than 800 Latin American clerics have been jailed, kidnapped, expelled or, in some cases, killed since 1968".⁸ In El Salvador for example, Archbishop Galdames speaks loud and clear in favour of the peasants and against tyranny and terror. Recently a priest and two of his companions were machine-gunned, 47 Jesuits were threatened of execution, 29 people were killed in a vicious raid on an area where the Christian Peasants' Federation was active, etc. According to the Archbishop, "the conflict is between the State and the people. The Church is simply trying to defend the people".⁹ In their preparation of the forthcoming CELAM meeting, the 230

7. Denis Goulet, in "A New Moral Order", Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1974, p. 84. This book provides a simple introduction to "liberation theology".

8. "Taking on the Vatican", in "Time", May 8, 1978, p. 43. The emphasis is ours.

9. "An Archbishop Without Fear", in "Time", July 24, 1978, p. 42.

bishops of Brazil said that there must be "prophetic criticism of the socio-economic and political systems reigning in Latin America". *In the midst of tensions within the Church and conflicts with the Government, a sizeable portion of the Latin American Church therefore continues the struggle.*

The Philippines

After four centuries of Spanish colonial rule and half-a-century of American protectorate, the Philippines became independent in 1946 and continued its development along capitalist lines. In the 1960s, communists were banned and went underground. Barred by the country's Constitution to present himself as President for a third time in 1973, Ferdinand Marcos proclaimed martial law on September 21, 1972, clamped down on the mass media and imprisoned the opposition leaders. According to "Amnesty International", there were at least 2,000 political prisoners in late 1977 and the number of tortures and secret executions was growing. It is in this context that several Christian men and women—many of them bishops, priests and religious—stood for truth and justice.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) indirectly supported martial law in 1972. Yet, 17 Bishops dissociated themselves from the CBCP and took a more critical stand. Within a week of the proclamation of martial law, the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP) "appealed to the President to shorten its duration, to speed up the disposition of cases of political detainees, and to restore basic human freedom". Within a year the AMRSP undertook a nation-wide study of the situation and plunged into purposeful action. In 1973 and 1974, the CBCP also grew more critical, but still accepted the 1974 referendum and tried to ensure a free vote. Along with a few other Bishops and the AMRSP, Bishop Claver however opposed it and had 10,000 of his faithful to co-sign a critical letter to the President. Some 40,000 people pledged not to participate in the referendum; 15 Bishops and the AMRSP similarly opposed the 1975 referendum. In the meantime, some priests like de la Torre, Nacu, Mabàyra and Jalandoni, had been accused of subversive activities and arrested.

In 1974, Archbishop Jaime Sin of Manila protested against a government raid by celebrating a Mass for truth and justice with 5000 people; he also denounced in the international press torture of political detainees, military abuses and biased referenda. When President Marcos banned the right to strike, the Archbishop protested vigorously and "within a week, over

20 bishops and some 2,000 priests and religious, together with some 20,000 of the faithful co-signed the letter of the Archbishop''. The President then amended his decree and forbade strikes only in vital industries. In 1975, the AMRSP got involved in the defence of sugar workers and other labourers. Notwithstanding the 1975 intervention of Rome—which 17 Bishops opposed in a joint letter—the AMRSP pledged in 1976 "to continue work of evangelization in the social, economic, and political dimensions in spite of and even because of religious oppression." Throughout these years, several episcopal commissions also persisted in exercising free speech, a free press, and criticism of government abuses. By 1976, the government had deported 4 foreign missionaries; arrested 73 Church workers who were assisting cultural minorities in the South, and had closed down two Church-owned radio stations and three newspapers. In January 1977, a united CBCP therefore strongly attacked the excesses of the martial law regime.¹⁰ On 16th April 1978, Bishop Claver, the Jesuit Provincial, and 75 other Jesuits, wrote to Marcos about the "widespread irregularities (that) substantially affected the outcome of the last elections in the Metro Manila area." They approved the protest march of April 9 and demanded the release of those who were arrested as well as the opening up of "effective legitimate means of protests."

According to Roekaerts, *one can distinguish 3 groups within the Catholic Church in the Philippines. The "administrative" Church* "confines itself to the denunciation of social evils without relating them to the existing socio-political situation. This group, headed by Cardinal Sin, comprises the majority of the Catholic Bishops, a minority of the religious superiors, and a numerically unidentifiable body of priests, nuns, and laity". *The "prophetic" Church*—"composed of the majority of the major religious superiors of men and women-bound together in the AMRSP, a minority of Catholic bishops (often referred to as the group of 17) and again an unknown number of

10. Mil Roekaerts, "The Philippines, Five Years of Martial Law", in "Pro Mundi Vita: Dossiers", May-June 1977, especially pp. 19-27. Sr. Christine Tan, former President of the Conference of the Major Religious Superiors of Women in the Philippines, spoke of "political apostolate" in the following terms: "Political involvement is a new apostolate towards justice, which is not readily recognised by the church... It does not confine itself to personal sin as such, but aims to strike at the roots of personal sin, which is social, structural sin... Political struggle (apostolate) is concerned with the colossal and masterfully organized structures of sin in Asia... It simply means that one has chosen to be with persons or communities seeking political liberation... The arena of political liberation is the human condition and its bondage by law, of State and Church, and by systems..." (Marie Tobin, "A Movement of Women Religious in Asia", in "Vidyajyoti", 1978, pp. 167-8).

priests, nuns, and faithful"—sees its involvement as an integral part of its pastoral action and denounces martial law as "the main cause of injustice." Considering non-involvement as unchristian, this group makes use of conscientization programmes and assists "the oppressed sectors to come to economic self-reliance, political participation, self-determination and self-identity." *The "militant" or "revolutionary" Church*—comprising a minority of religious and lay people who have been involved in grass-roots social action—"fully oppose all involvement with any aspect of the martial law system and go to the extent of getting involved with Marxist and Maoist pressure groups who want to bring about a radical change". This third minority group, "the unknown of the field, opted for total commitment up to and including violence if necessary.... This group, which has contacts with the insurgents, accepts violence not as an ordinary means of achieving structural reforms but as a last resource in the defence of life and human rights. It takes the view that violence can be employed without hatred of people and without an aftermath of continuing violence and hatred."¹¹

Several other examples of concrete struggles for social justice and social transformation, including those of the World Council of Churches could be given. Christians are also taking active part in the building of a socialist country like Tanzania and of communist countries like Cuba, Vietnam, and even China.¹² *Though such radical christian groups still remain a minority—but an important one—in the Church, all this shows that there is hope for the future.* Let us now turn towards the liberating Church that is slowly emerging.

The Liberating Church

Within the Church, a strong minority group is now adopting an alternative model of development and involvement. This development model "envisaging the transformation of social structures (landlordism, money lending, class domination, political power of capital holders, industrial or agricultural,

11. *ibid.*, pp. 27-30.

12. On this, see Appendix 2. On China, see "Documents of the Three-Self Movement", published by the Far Eastern Office, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., New York, 1963. And on Vietnam: "A Period of accommodation with the Communists has now begun. Saigon's Archbishop, Nguyen Van Binh, 65, has promised to reshuffle 'the structure and personnel of catholic dioceses', to eliminate anti-communist dissidents, and to 'teach catholics their duties to the country' ('A Cardinal from Hanoi', in "Time" June 7, 1976, p. 21).

etc.) is based on the analysis revealing the existing conflict in society and leading to the necessity of organizing the lowest group (85% in the Indian case) as power group, locally or nationally."¹³ I shall now briefly examine some of the main characteristics of the liberating Church which shape this understanding of society and approach to action. Special attention will be paid to the freedom of the Church, the need for close contacts with the people, the meaning and aims of liberation, the role of conflict in the Church's practice, prophetic denunciation and action, and the description of an authentic Christianity with regard to community, worship, spirituality, and leadership. In this section, I shall quote several declarations which well express the stand taken by important groups in the Church.

Freedom

The liberating Church first of all feels the need of dissociating itself from the rich and the powerful and the structures they have built. In their 1968 Manifesto, the Bishops of Brazil for example declared: "We must admit in all humility and in a spirit of repentance that the church has not been always faithful to its prophetic mission and to its evangelical role to be on the side of the people. Caught in the nets of injustice prevailing in the world, how often has the Church played the game of the oppressors and favoured those who by their wealth and power are the strong ones, to the detriment of the common good, and disfiguring sadly the message of the Gospel." *The Church must also free itself from false interpretations of Christianity that favour the status quo:* "The oppressors, who want to gain profit from the oppression also know how to defend their own ideology in the name of God and to get God on their side, so as to make 'use of him' to preserve the established 'order' so to suit them... They are the complaisant defenders of the 'status quo'. For obvious reasons, they privatise their christian faith, making it an affair of mere personal relation with God which has nothing to do with the economic, social and political activities of human life. They use religion as an ideology at the service of their class and in the defence of their institutions which are not at all in the service of man. They thus put themselves into opposition against God's designs."¹⁴

13. Houtart, "Religion and Development...", op. cit., p. 78.

14. "I have heard the cries of my people", Extracts reprinted by Indian Social Institute, Bangalore, for Private Circulation, pp. 5 & 3. On this, see also Appendix 1, especially nos 20-22

Tissa Balasuriya has something very similar to say about the churches in Asia: "We have generally disregarded socio-economic analysis and been indifferent to political and economic exploitation both internal and external. We have been implicitly on the side of the status quo, at least by our seemingly approving *silence*. Sometimes we have been accomplices in the processes of alienation of the Asian people and even benefited from the presence and power of the exploiters. In fact we have been on the side of practical capitalism in a rather uncritical manner, sometimes perhaps unconsciously helping it, propagating it, legitimizing it and even tending to consecrate it. Our Churches, priestly and religious life have tended to accept the values of capitalist society and fit themselves within its framework."¹⁵

In spite of its insertion in history, the Church should indeed always maintain its freedom and independence from existing systems, for it is essentially prophetic and critical. This message was clearly stated by 15 Bishops of Latin America in their famous 1967 "Pastoral From the Third World": "In its pilgrimage through this world, the Church is in practice always involved in whatever political, social and economic system is, at any given moment, ensuring the common good, or at least some form of social order. It can happen that churches are so closely connected with such systems as to appear inextricably linked with them, almost as partners in a marriage. But the Church's only spouse is Christ. It has never been married to any system at all, least of all, to 'the international imperialism of money' ('Populorum Progressio'), any more than to the monarchies or feudal systems of the past, or the various socialisms that may come in the future... Nowadays, the Church's social teaching, reaffirmed by Vatican II, makes it quite clear that it is not involved in that imperialism of money though for a time it certainly was one of the forces with which it was linked... The Church in its essential and permanent reality—its fidelity to and communion with Christ in the Gospel—has never been identified with any political, economic or social system. *Should any system stop promoting the greater good of the greater number in favour of the profit of the few, then the Church must not merely denounce the injustice, but dissociate itself from the whole evil system, and be prepared to collaborate with a different system that would be juster and more in tune with the needs of the age.*"¹⁶

15. Quoted in "The Radical Bible", Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1972, pp. 129-30.

16. "The Rebel Church...", op. cit., pp. 171-2. The emphasis is ours.

Sharing People's Lives

The liberating Church and its leaders should moreover closely share the lives of the people In an open letter to their Bishops, 300 priests from around Sao Paulo, Brazil, thus deplored their lack of contacts with the world: "As men we feel ourselves prisoners. *We are set apart from the people*, first of all because of the houses we live in. Our housing and all the other things we have, are completely middle class, whereas almost all the people are much poorer. And, even worse than our homes, our life-style, our mentality and our education all divide us from them... In day-to-day events, we are inclined to prefer the company of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes to that of the poor and the workers. We are more likely to take part in the celebrations of the bourgeoisie...and we readily identify with their problems, aspirations and reactions. Then, too, we mix more with those elements closest to the Church. We move in our own world, the Catholic world, where we fit in, where we are accepted and treated with consideration... That is why we are left undisturbed by the people, unaffected by their problems... *(We are) far away from the concerns of the people...* (Since our lives are not conditioned by family responsibilities, job instability, wages, and the need for a professional training) we experience none of the disadvantages suffered by others as a result of the innumerable inadequacies in our national institutions. That is why we simply do not understand the struggle of the peasants, of the factory workers, of the students; that is why we can be so lighthearted in sitting in judgement upon them. That, it seems to us, is why we can so placidly accept the violence, the oppression, the military atmosphere, and indeed the whole capitalist and feudal situation prevailing in our country." Priests and bishops should, on the contrary, "live like the ordinary run of people."¹⁷

Salvific Action Today

Freed from its ties with capitalism and living in close contact with the people, the liberating Church can discover the full implications of the Gospel. In their Manifesto, the Bishops of Brazil thus explained *the relevance of God's Word for today's world*: "I have seen the misery of my people and have heard its cries arising from oppression. Yes, I know its anxieties' (Ex 3,7). These words addressed by God to Moses express

17. *ibid.*, pp. 131-3 & 137. More than 1000 priests finally signed this letter.

well our sentiments today. In the face of the sufferings of our people, humiliated and oppressed for centuries, *the Word of God impels us to take a clear position... on the side of the people*, together with all those who work with them for their liberation. In the footsteps of Moses we want to fulfil our mission as pastors and as prophets amidst God's people. We speak out because the word of God urges us, of God who judges the events. In its light we seek to interpret the groaning of our people, the facts and events made evident by a serious analysis of the human reality in which we live... Let nobody tell us that it is not our business to speak concretely about the human reality, so as to relegate us to the so-called spiritual domain. For us the spiritual domain encompasses man in his totality and in all his dimensions, provided he be seen in the light of God's judgement, and in the perspective of the all-encompassing action of the spirit. Hence *we have to deal with human problems, with economic, social and political questions in as much as these concern man and are God's concern too.*"¹⁸

The Word of God therefore challenges us to realize the true meaning of salvation or liberation: "*Salvation* cannot be understood as a reality situated outside the world, beyond history, only attainable in the beyond of time. *It begins here and now...* Salvation is realised in the world, in history. Originating in God, it penetrates humanity through the vicissitudes of history, and gradually reveals itself within the long and complex process of the liberation of man. Having a personal and interior dimension, *the total liberation to be genuine must include an economic, social and political dimension...* Hence liberation, in the full sense, becomes real through a people and in a people, there where man lives the socio-political dimensions of life. As in the time of Moses, a people by seeking its human promotion and trying to free itself from the yoke of slavery, realises thereby one aspect of God's plan, and announces, even if not fully conscious of it, the salvation which becomes a reality in its life through history. Obviously, as the Pharaoh of old, those who hold the enslaving power refuse to admit the salvific value within the struggle of the people. They refuse to recognise *the presence of God in the vital energy of the poor*. Yet the poor of Yahweh are a privileged people in God's history, in the hope which cannot be defeated, in the aspirations for liberation, for true peace and real brotherhood."¹⁹

18. "I have heard the cries...", op. cit., pp. 1 & 2.

19. *ibid.*, p. 4.

Structural & Socialist Transformation

Enlightened by our faith, we are called to live like Christ the Gospel and to build up a new society: "The economic, social, cultural and political situation of our people is a challenge to our christian conscience. Malnutrition, the high infant mortality rate, increasing unemployment, the growth of disparity between rich and poor, widespread exploitation and the many consequences of all these, make of this situation in our country, one of *institutionalised violence*... The economic and social structures prevailing in our country are based on injustice and oppression, and we are in a situation which is neither human nor Christian. The actual policies of planning in no way can serve the cause of liberation of the oppressed. A deep understanding of our social reality makes it clear that the aspirations of the people today demand nothing less than *a global and total transformation of society*... What is the way out of this inhuman situation? No other route is open for the oppressed than *a socialisation of the means of production*. Only thus can a total transformation of society bring about these objective conditions which will make it possible for the oppressed to regain their humanity stolen from them, and to free themselves from the chains causing their endless suffering and thus to conquer freedom. The Gospel calls all christians and all men of good-will to commit themselves to this *prophetic thrust of history*. Christian hope... demands of us an active involvement through which we will be able to bring to life from within the current of history the signs of the Resurrection, the beginning of a New Humanity of the Future."²⁰

"The Pastoral for the Third World" is still clearer in its *condemnation of capitalism and support of socialism*: "There are certain errors which it is most urgent to correct: no, *it is not God's will* that there be rich people who benefit from this world's goods by exploiting the poor. It is not God's will that there should always be people sunk in abject poverty. Religion is not an opium for the people. Religion is a force which raises the humble and puts down the arrogant, which gives bread to the hungry and sends the rich away empty." "In view of the need for certain definite material progress, the Church has for a century tolerated capitalism with money-lending at interest and other activities which have little in common with the morality of the Gospel and the prophets. But it can only rejoice over the gradual emergence of *a new social system* less remote from that morality... Christians have a duty to show 'that *true socialism is the fullest way of living Christianity, with a*

20. *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

just distribution of goods, and equality for all.' Far from being distressed by it, we must be happy to recognize and support a new form of social life that is better suited to the times we live in and more in conformity with the spirit of the Gospel. By our acceptance, we shall stop people from identifying God and religion with those who oppress the poor and the workers—in other words with feudalism, capitalism and imperialism. God and true religion have nothing in common with the Mammon of iniquity in any form. The reverse is true: God and true religion are always on the side of those trying to foster a more equal and fraternal society among all God's children in the great human family."²¹

Many Christians in India might be surprised to read that Catholic Bishops made the above mentioned statements about socialism. In fact, these statements do not deny the existence of structures of exploitation in socialist countries, but place socialist efforts of reconstruction in their proper historical perspective. Since capitalism is not centred on the common good of all and on popular participation, there is no hope for a generalized human development in Third World countries under this system. As Houtart points out, *it is therefore "towards the socialist model that one must direct oneself in order to solve the fundamental problems.* Some may think that alternative models exist. That is not my conviction, after ten years of working in Asian societies and still longer in Latin American societies. Doubtless, an analysis of present socialist experiences reveals difficulties, errors and even a certain number of contradictions, but they do have the merit of directing their attention at first to the solution of the vital problems of the whole people and particularly the oppressed classes."²² We must therefore adopt a socialist model and give it a human face. According to M. M. Thomas, we are now *"witnessing in India the search for a new social philosophy in which Gandhism with its emphasis on people's power and participation has central place, sought to be comprised with Marxian insights on the reality and necessity of class struggle and with liberal democratic values."*²³

21. "The Rebel Church...", pp. 178 & 175. The emphasis is ours. The Bishops cite a Council intervention by Patriarch Maximos IV, on 28 September 1965. A little further, they quote Mgr F. Franic of Yugoslavia: "For what they (the workers) want is to be owners, and not merely sellers of their labour... To sell or buy labour is a kind of slavery." (ibid., p. 176).

22. "The Non-Socialist Societies of South and East Asia After the Vietnam War", University of Louvain, 1976, p. 31. The emphasis is ours.

23. "Revolution in India and Christian Humanism", published by Forum for Christian Concern for People's Struggle, Delhi, 1978, pp. 11-2.

Rights of All Men

The liberating Church is evidently concerned with the rights of all the citizens of our country rather than those of Christian minorities. It is certainly legitimate for the Church to defend its minority rights. Yet, as M. M. Thomas argues, *"these rights are best procured, not as rights of a particular minority but as civil liberties and democratic rights of all citizens... I say this because the idea of supporting the Emergency in return for some of these rights was pursued by the Christian community. But already during the Emergency this policy of indifference to general human rights in the name of minority rights became self-defeating. The State authorities did not hesitate to demand that even the choice of Bishops of the Church should get the State approval. Very often this kind of communal approach goes along with an opportunist or principled subservience to whoever is in power in the State. Often it goes also with a pietistic indifference to politics in general and the acceptance of the secularist definition of religion as a private subjective affair between a person and his or her Maker or as salvation after death. This tantamounts to acknowledging that Christianity has nothing to do with political morality and the pursuit of human values in the State—which, to my mind, is a distortion of the truth."*²⁴ *"The Christian approach to the contemporary political revolution should not be from the point of view of communal considerations of the Christian minority or in the interests of preserving any religious interests over against secularism; the Christian should approach politics and State from the standpoint of a genuine concern for the humanity of all people within the framework of God's concern for mankind in Jesus Christ... The Christian response is to co-operate with men of all religions and no religion to humanise the contemporary political revolution in India and the structures of politics and the State, so that they may serve human rights. Like Sabbath, the State is made for man and not man for the State."*²⁵

Conflict & Violence

The liberating Church can exist only when religious beliefs are not associated with avoiding conflicts at any cost. One of the most debilitating factor on the part of the hierarchical Church is indeed its mistaken understanding of the function of conflict. Conflict is thought of as something undesirable which should always be avoided. Even if this attitude leads to making

24. *ibid.*, pp. 17-8.

25. *ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

many compromises that directly go against the realization of justice and equality in a particular situation, it is preferred. The consequences of this attitude for those deprived of justice is not a matter of much concern, for the so-called ethical principle takes precedence over the life of people. Too many moralists do not indeed "recognize that when collective power, whether in the form of imperialism or class domination, exploits weakness, it can never be dislodged unless power is raised against it... Modern religious idealists usually follow in the wake of scientists in advocating compromise and accommodation as the way to social justice."²⁶ Conflicts should, on the contrary, be understood as a normal part of life. As Paulo Freire wrote, "Reality, a process and not a static fact, is full of contradictions, and... social conflicts are not metaphysical categories but rather historical expressions of the confrontation of these contradictions. Any attempt, therefore, to solve conflict without touching the contradictions which have generated it only stifles the conflict and at the same time strengthens the ruling class."²⁷

In their letter to Paul VI, the two most powerful trade-unions of Latin America, representing 5 million Christian workers and peasants, thus explained their motives for encouraging the *social revolution*: "And now, Brother Paul, let us talk of revolution, for that is what we have in our hearts, and that is what the realities of Latin America demand. It is not possible to give priority to the human advancement and overall development of our peoples without making any commitment as to the political means for achieving them. The total development of the peoples of Latin America, and the overall advancement of Latin American man both depend on one preliminary condition: social revolution. And that is why every thinking Latin American and every genuine Christian recognizes that, given the demands of love and solidarity, this social revolution is too necessary to be put off any longer. It would be wrong to identify this revolutionary process indispensable to Latin America with a system of violence or an attitude of hatred. *This revolution is born of a profound longing for justice, dignity, love of mankind—of every man and of all the individuals living on our continent.*"²⁸

It is not my intention to deal here with the whole question of violence. Yet, certain extracts of the 1968 letter of 920

26. R. Niebuhr, "Moral Man and Immoral Society", Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, pp. XII & XIII.

27. "Education, Liberation and the Church", cyclostyled document.

28. "The Rebel Church...", p. 71. The emphasis is ours.

priests from Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Bolivia, etc., to the Latin American hierarchy are worth quoting. The light of Christian revelation, they wrote, "makes it clear to us that *to condemn oppressed people for finding themselves obliged to use violence to win their freedom is actually to commit a further and most appalling injustice in their regard.* If the Latin American Church were to utter such a condemnation, then religion would once again look like the 'opium of the people', and the tool of those who have for centuries been practising the violence of exploitation and oppression, with the hunger, ignorance and poverty that result. Furthermore, it would be confusing in the extreme if that Church contradicted itself by condemning the violence of people who want to free themselves from the oppression of an unjust system today, while at the same time honouring the heroes of a political independence which was certainly not achieved by non-violent means in the past."

"These considerations cause us, respectfully and in all confidence, to beg our pastors assembled here:

1. That in considering the violence in Latin America, they should do everything possible to *avoid comparing or identifying* the unjust violence of the oppressors who support this 'iniquitous system' with the just violence of the oppressed, who are forced into the position of having to use violence if they are to gain their freedom.
2. To make a clear and unambiguous denunciation of the state of violence into which those in power—whether individuals, groups or nations—have for so long plunged the peoples of our continent; and to proclaim those peoples' right to legitimate self-defence.
3. To exhort the Christians on this continent clearly and strongly to opt for whatever can contribute to the true liberation of man in Latin America, and the establishment of a juster and more fraternal society, in close collaboration with all people of good will.
4. To allow those Christians a greater measure of freedom to choose the means which seem to them most effective for achieving that liberation and building up that society.

All this does not mean that we are setting ourselves up as the standard-bearers of indiscriminate violence. Quite the reverse: we anguish at the thought that *it is only by force that justice can be re-established.* But we feel obliged to assume the heavy responsibility the situation demands. It is not a matter of idealizing violence, but of adding a further dimen-

sion to the principle that has so often been proclaimed: that every unjustly oppressed community has a right to act against an unjust aggressor, with violence if need be. The aggression we are attacking is that of the oppressive structures now preventing the full and harmonious development of vast sections of our peoples, and which, tacitly but effectively, reject all forms of 'bold transformations; innovations that go deep.'²⁹

Prophetic Denunciation and Action

With its renewed vision, the liberating Church exercises its prophetism in words and actions. The 1967 declaration of the Brazilian clergy emphasized this point: "We believe that it is our duty to do more to fulfil our role as prophets in a practical way. *We must develop our prophetic awareness as well as our prophetic action.* Though the prophet's first task is to teach, he must also create. Sensitive to the times he lives in, and to the life and events going on around him, he studies the designs and judgements of the Lord and reveals them to men. He sees the realities of our lives, our attitudes as individuals, and everything we do, however important or unimportant, as so many signs of fidelity or infidelity to the spirit of the creating and redeeming God, the spirit of the Gospel—whether within the human community or within the Church itself... Surely what the desperate situation of our people demands is that more priests and bishops should thus align themselves with the prophets? We certainly believe so. We believe it to be *our right and our duty to denounce as evil and sinful:* inadequate wages, lack of food, the exploitation of the poor and of our country, and the suppression of freedom. It is here that we often make the mistake, many of us, of considering this a political attitude, and therefore outside our sphere. Yet *Christ's own prophetic action and fidelity to truth certainly presuppose an inevitable involvement in politics.*"³⁰

According to Bishop Claver, *silence is the greatest collective sin of the church's official leadership.* Though they should not be involved in partisan politics, Churchmen should unambiguously speak out when there are deep moral issues at stake like freedom of conscience, human dignity, human rights,

29. *ibid.*, pp. 165-7. The last line is from "Populorum Progressio", no 32. The first and last emphases are ours.

30. *ibid.*, pp. 136-7. As mentioned above, more than 1000 priests signed this declaration. The emphasis is ours.

justice, etc.³¹ Prophetic action can be centred either on social justice issues or on broader, and more directly political, questions of global transformation of society. It can take the forms of public demonstrations, protest marches, strikes, boycotting of goods and services, civil disobedience movements, courting arrest, organization of parallel governments, etc. As the 1971 Roman Synod declared, "*together with the whole Church, priests are obliged, to the utmost of their ability, to take a clear line of action, when it is a question of the defence of fundamental human rights, the promotion of the full development of persons and the pursuit of the cause of peace and justice...* This principle is valid not only in the individual sphere, but also in the social field".³²

Authentic Christianity

It is in this context that one can understand better how closely linked are the Eucharist, change of structures, conflicts, genuine christian communities, true reconciliation, a new spirituality and style of leadership.

In their 1968 Declaration of Cieneguilla, 35 Peruvian priests for example understood their responsibilities with regard to *the Eucharist* as follows: "We must take with the utmost seriousness our obligation to make it clear in no uncertain terms that it is impossible to receive Communion, and lead a genuinely Christian life, while at the same time defrauding people of their wages, evading taxes, reducing Indians to a state of slavery, subjecting one's servants to inhuman conditions, living in ostentatious luxury in the face of a world of poverty. 'No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, while others lack necessities'".³³ In accordance with these principles, a few Bishops of the Philippines and Latin America forbade some politicians the frequentation of the sacraments on account of their unchristian policies.

Gutierrez rightly poses the problem of an authentic *Christian community*: "The polarization of... (political) options and the extreme seriousness of the situation have even placed some Christians among the oppressed and persecuted and others among the oppressors and persecutors, some among

31. "The Church, Government and Development", in "Impact", April 1976.

32. Declaration on "The Priestly Ministry". The emphasis is ours.

33. 'The Rebel Church ..', p. 148. The authors quote "Populorum Progressio", no 23. Hundreds of priests later on signed this letter.

the tortured and others among the torturers or those who condone torture. This gives rise to a serious and radical confrontation between Christians who suffer from injustice and exploitation and those who benefit from the established order. Under such circumstances, *life in the contemporary Christian community becomes particularly difficult and conflictual*. Participation in the Eucharist, for example, as it is celebrated today, appears to many to be an action which, for want of the support of an authentic community, becomes an exercise in make-believe."³⁴ In such conditions, how can Christians celebrate the unity of the Church in the Eucharist? The false unity that exists today has to give way to a real unity. Unjust structures have to be changed, for there can be no true reconciliation without this step. *Real unity and community can be achieved only through the struggle that brings about a new society*. How can those engaged in class struggle then receive the body of Christ with their oppressors? This gesture possesses a meaning only if both groups remain open to the future and sincerely try to build a new society in the light of the Gospel. To form a genuine community, Christians must not only worship together, but also toil together—and with all people of good will—to build the more humane and just society that will concretely realize universal brotherhood.

In their 1975 World Council Declaration, the Young Christian Workers (YCW) sharply raised the issue of *Christian class struggle*: "Many say that the command to love all men prevents Christians from involvement in class struggle. Yet, many young Christian workers see that class struggle is a fact, and that fidelity to their own reality and to their fellow-workers requires a total commitment in this struggle. How can we reconcile these two demands of a Christian worker?" After pointing out that faith and radical struggle continually confront and challenge each other, the YCW answered: "We insist that the existence of classes is a fact. *The challenge of the Gospel is not to pretend that we have no enemies, but to love them... it does not mean that oppressors are no longer enemies against whom we struggle*. In fact, we see that oppressors must also be liberated, because they too are enslaved by the situation as exploiters. Our struggle for the liberation of workers, is also indirectly an action for the liberation of all. In this struggle, we believe that the expression 'unity between christians' must never be allowed to weaken the more fundamental unity between working people, whatever their religious beliefs, or to disguise the reality of the society in

34. "A Theology of Liberation", SCM Press Ltd., London, 1974, p. 137. For a short introduction on class struggle, brotherhood and reconciliation, see for example Gutierrez (ibid., pp. 272-9) and Goulet (op. cit., pp. 121-7).

which we live. To be with the oppressed means being against the oppressor."

In the midst of its revolutionary involvement, the liberating Church develops *a new leadership style and spirituality*. Instead of being mainly a question of status, position, and spiritual responsibility, leadership becomes more and more a brotherly life-involvement in people's movements for human rights with their unavoidable conflicts and confrontations. Leadership is then exercised in the open society and not in the confines of ecclesiastical institutions. Besides answering specifically religious needs, worship also assumes meaningful social dimensions and becomes intimately connected with peoples' aspirations and struggles for liberation. The Word of God helps participants to discern the signs of the times and discover God's salvific designs in concrete instances of exploitation. In and through worship, Christians praise God and celebrate already achieved liberations. They also grow in their awareness of other steps towards a fuller liberation and receive strength and comfort from the assurance of God's presence in these forthcoming struggles. Through the constant interaction of involvement and worship, Christians develop a spirituality of action and even of combat. *Their faith does not give them only an extra level of meaning, but also an extra level of action.* It is unfortunate that certain Christian circles in India today spend so much time and energy on "charismatic prayer meetings", transactional analysis, group dynamic sessions, and the like. Nobody denies the need for prayer, emotional and psychological growth, and human fellowship... Yet, these activities too often take middle class Christians away from real life-situations, especially those of the oppressed, and substitute some kind of "uninvolved prayer" and psychological compensation for a prophetic and evangelical reflection on today's world and the authentic fellowship that is experienced in the struggle for a better society.

The Process of Growth

The present-day Church can become the liberating Church through a painful process of growth.

We must first of all realise that Christ's message with regard to the socio-economic, political and cultural reality of our country can only take flesh through prophetic individuals and small groups. Though some of its leaders may play this liberating role, the institutional Church as such cannot do it at this juncture. *It is not the mighty Church but the little flock that will make Christ's concern for bread, equality and freedom, present to our people.* The role of prophetic individuals and small

groups in awakening and transforming the institutionalized Church—and its clergy, religious congregations, and manifold organizations—is well attested by the experiences of the Philippines, Latin America, etc.

Under the impact of these prophets and the popular response they evoke, *the official Church progressively changes its stand*. At the beginning, the hierarchical Church almost always condemns and opposes liberation movements, some of its leaders even viewing them as "diabolic" and ungodly; at best, the Church stands aloof and hesitates. When these movements gain ground, the Church is, so to say, forced to open its eyes and to recognize, at least to some extent, their validity. Even then, it is with "caution" and "prudence" that the hierarchy supports movements for human rights, social justice, and societal transformation. It still insists on "spiritual liberation" and preaches "service for all", "peaceful methods", "reconciliation", etc. Some members of the hierarchy usually join the prophetic voices—and may even lead them—at one stage or another, but often in their individual rather than official capacity. At a later stage, the official Church may become more aware of the exploitation of the masses and the repressive violence of the rich and powerful... It may then take a much stronger stand and unambiguously denounce this oppression.

*The presence of prophetic individuals and small groups inevitably brings about tensions and conflictual situations inside the institutional Church.*³⁵ In such circumstances, Christians have indeed different understandings of society, development, struggles for social justice and societal transformation, violence, social role of the Church and its leaders, etc. Contemporary Christian prophets reject do-goodism and palliative reforms and commit themselves to the dominated social classes and to radical social changes. And the institutional Church, at least at the beginning, usually looks upon these prophets as "disturbing and subversive elements"—sometimes, it even considers them as "communists"—and tends to disown them. Opposed and attacked by both the custodians of the institutional Church and the powerful of the world, *prophetic individuals and groups have therefore to suffer much for their stand*. For they are confronted with "the hard reality of a Church which contradicts simultaneously the demands of their political commitment and those of their faith".³⁶ They thus often experience tensions in their life. In

35. On this, see for example Houtart, "Religion and Development...", op. cit., pp. 78-9, and "Christians for Socialism" (Appendix 1, nos 20-24).

36. "Christians for Socialism...", no 20.

fact, numerous Christians have left the Church, and many priests or religious the priesthood or their religious congregations. Yet, especially nowadays, several others decide to continue the struggle as Christians, priests or religious, for they know that *they are thus paving the way for a radical transformation of the Church and its more relevant contribution to the world*. Instead of being bitter against the Church, they become more realistic, understand better how institutions historically evolve, join hands in their struggles with all people of good will, and constantly try to involve more and more individuals and groups in liberation struggles.

Hope for the Church in India?

In the last decade or so, *some Christian individuals and small groups in India* have been working for social justice and liberation. Some theologians, like M. M. Thomas, Sebastian Kappen and Samuel Rayan, have reflected on the socio-economic, political and cultural reality of our country in the light of the Gospel. The dialogue with Marxists has been initiated and Christians have also assembled to consider the relationship between their faith and socialism. Christian movements, such as the YCS/YSM, AICUF, SCM, and YCW, have started to spread social awareness and to form dedicated leaders. Some Christian groups have moreover supported the struggles of fishermen in Kerala, Goa, and Tamil Nadu. A few individuals and groups have defended the rights of tribals, Harijans, agricultural workers, and small-farmers in various parts of the country and others have been involved in conscientization programmes and people's organizations. Some Christians have also opposed the Emergency and defended the rights of political prisoners.³⁷ A few priests like Robert Currie,³⁸ J. Vadakkan³⁹ and Antony Murmu, have been deeply involved in social justice issues or political struggles and have had to suffer on account of their stand. A few members of the hierarchy, like Bishop Saupin,⁴⁰ seek a greater relevance in the

37. For an interesting study of the attitudes of Christians towards the Emergency, see "Christians and the Emergency: Some Documents", in "Religion and Society", June/Sept 1977.

38. "The Church—Credible Sign of People's Liberation? Socio-Political and Theological Analysis of a Church Movement in Bihar, India", Joachim Wietzke (ed), Centre for Human Concern, Mangalore, 1978.

39. "A Priest's Encounter with Revolution", CISRS-CLS, Bangalore-Madras.

40. Address of Bishop G. Saupin, Daltonganj, in "The Aspirations of a Just Society and the Role of Women Religious", CRI (Women's Section), 1974, pp. 19-28.

different apostolates of the institutional Church. Though still rare, such individuals and groups are growing...

It is possible that, in the future, the Church in India will be influenced by such individuals and small groups and become more and more prophetic and liberating. The Church may indeed acquire a more correct understanding of reality—especially with regard to the importance of structures and conflicts in society—and reshape its vision of the future and outlook on the processes of change. The Church may also be deeply converted to evangelical values and, confronting the present structures of exploitation and dissociating itself from capitalist values and systems, become truly involved in struggles for social justice and societal transformation. The Church may finally share the lives and struggles of the people and thus bring credibility to its words and actions by its life-style. In this way, the Church would become an ever more liberating force *for all Indians and in all the dimensions of their lives.*

All this would mean true indianization and evangelization. As Samuel Rayan wrote, indianization "includes not only taking to the people's language and art but also living within their socio-economic conditions and sharing their lot with all its limitations and insecurities. Conceptions of inculturation and incarnate existence will be sadly lame, if the economic aspects of the question are left out."⁴¹ In the same vein, evangelization cannot be relevant unless it addresses itself to the unjust and oppressive situations of contemporary India and takes the forms of liberation.⁴² Evangelization, here and now, means the progressive penetration of liberating Christian values into the thought-patterns, customs, and structures of Indian society. It is only in this way that the Church would fulfil its evangelical mission in the precise set-up of our country.

But, *will the Church in India become this prophetic and liberating Church?* In their letter to Paul VI, the two most powerful trade-unions of Latin America very well expressed the choice that their Church had then to make and their hopes. Their letter could have been written to Pope John Paul II about the Church in India today... It would read as follows: "*Brother John Paul, we are left with one major doubt: will the Church make the great leap needed to change its 'historical axis'?*" Do you understand what we mean? Up to now the 'historical

41. "Flesh of India's Flesh", in "Jeevadhara", May—June 1976.

42. Report of the Synodal Members from India on the Synod on "Evangelization of the Modern World",—Report of the Standing Committee of the CBCI, Bangalore, Nov. 14-15, 1974, pp. 29 & 32.

axis' and the 'social basis' of your Church in India have been constituted by the propertied classes. Do you realize that if the Church becomes the Church of the poor, it will be the poor, as its new historical axis, who must play the decisive role in the Church too? We are not trying to create a class struggle: all we want to know is whether we are going to remain on the level of verbal professions of faith, or whether we shall carry them to their logical practical consequences?"

"Revolution is a long road, Brother John Paul. And your Church, which still has great prestige, authority and sympathy here, if it were to be bold enough to transform itself radically, could become 'the voice' and 'the spirit' to 'make straight the way' for revolution in India... God grant that the Church, the people of God, may... opt out as soon as possible of this corrupt society, and *set off to meet the poor*--who are the majority of Indians--*and travel with them along the road to the kingdom of God. It is a road which begins in this world, and in India its name is 'social revolution'*. It is the building of a new society without feudalisms, capitalisms, imperialisms, dictatorships or repressions: a society worthy of the dignity of man, as man, and above all as son of God."⁴³ This is also our prayer and hope for the Church in India. But, *will the Church make the required choice? The decision is yet to be made...*

43. "The Rebel Church...", pp. 76-7. In this passage, we have substituted "India" for "Latin America" and "John Paul" for "Paul".

Conclusion

The Church in India

The previous chapter has explained how Christians, especially in Latin America, are trying to reinterpret their faith and religious practice so as to answer better today's needs. In conclusion, I shall now make a few remarks on the *social practice of the Church in India* as well as on *its present task* and shall also offer a few *guidelines for reorientation*.

In a recent article, Samuel Rayan has excellently described the social practice of the Church in our country. According to him, this practice reveals a perplexing ambiguity. We have chosen most of the time to keep silent about the enormous atrocities perpetuated on the poor, the small farmer, the landless worker, the Harijan and the Adivasi. *'We have not only been silent, we are deeply involved in the system itself* which is a system of individualism and competition with a view to maximisation of profit that can swell capital to be invested with accelerated competition for fatter profits. We are involved in this system and are supportive of it though perhaps unwittingly. *We have not adequately questioned the moral basis and the human consequences of capitalism, landlordism, the big industry with sophisticated technology, and export oriented economy, etc.* We have rather supported it with investments, or by letting ourselves be drawn into its dynamics by developing services that have to depend upon it continually. We have rarely stopped to ask what critical judgement our Faith has to pass on the system. All our churches seem to have accepted without questioning the classist pattern of social structuring. *We have settled down to the fact that rich and poor exist within the churches...* The intricate questions of *justice and christian fellowship* implied in the situation are never raised. Nor is attention paid to the social models implicit in and proposed by our Eucharistic celebrations... If we are consequent we christians should share all the resources of the Christian community in order to make sure, as the early christian communities made sure, that nobody among us is left in want and that no unfraternal classes and divisions exist in our midst... We spend *an undue proportion of our resources*, which are by no means small, in the service of *a minority of the wealthy* and the *well-to-do*, be these christian or non-Christian... We go out of our way to secure enormous funds to run colleges, special schools, medical colleges and excellent hospitals, all of which we know only the richer classes can

afford. Aid goes to the poor mainly in relief or in emergency cases...''¹

After emphasizing that the Church should take up, with all those who work for this cause, the issue of justice for all the deprived, Samuel Rayan continues: "The basis of the struggle will be *the rights of the millions* who belong to that class which has been working the hardest for generations and centuries and remained the poorest, also for centuries and generations. The fight will be against those *social and political mechanisms* by which the fruit of the toil of these millions is siphoned off and enjoyed by the few Blessed at the top rungs of the social ladder. The fight will be against *a conception of life and of man* which acquiesces in the existence of very rich and very poor in the same national or ecclesial community. The stand will be for a redistribution of resources in order to give some substance to the ideals of equality, freedom and democracy. For in a land-lordist-capitalist system of high productivity and cheap labour, these words are but hollow ideological gimmicks... It (the Church) will do well to devote its energies to detecting the causes of widespread misery and wretchedness, to attacking these causes, and to promoting action for the implementation of such directive principles of the Constitution as call for distribution of the national community's resources to subserve the common good, and for prevention of concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment (Const. Article 39(b), (c))"²

Rayan ends his article with a thought-provoking description of *the Church's mission in India*: "The task of the church is to champion a whole new social order of true and not merely nominal freedom and equality and people's power. It will begin with itself becoming the New Reality, an egalitarian, socialist society based on freedom and animated by love and realized in shared resources as indicated in the celebration of its Eucharist. It will go on to identify with the poor and suffering and dispossessed masses of men and women everywhere, help awaken their humanity, help them organise themselves for effective action to bring about a total revolution in structures of the heart as well as in structures of society so as to forge towards the creation of the New Earth of God's dreams and God's promises. It will organise the poor rather than go claiming privileges or begging for benefits. It will take an open stand for justice and try to establish its credibility after too

1. "The Church and Justice to Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin", paper presented at the National Convention held at the NBCLC, Bangalore, in June 1978, pp. 8-9. The emphasis is ours.

2. *ibid.*, p. 11. The emphasis is ours.

long a silence which has become an embarrassment to its members and its friends. Its call for a redistribution of national resources will be heralded by a re-allocation of its own resources with a clear partiality for the poor and the down-trodden which marks the entire history of God's action on our earth. It will take upon itself afresh its responsibility for its poor, but as a concrete sign of its involvement with the plight of all the poor of this land. And finally it will try to make sure that all its ranks, especially those who have come into its freedom from an oppressive past, become catalysts of social change and not seekers of social security, become leaders of liberation movements in favour of all the oppressed of our country and not enjoyers of a separate paradise."³

What *concrete guidelines* can be given for the apostolic reorientation of the Church in India? In their cautious 1978 declaration—which explicitly excludes the use of violence—the Bishops of India recognized the importance of social justice and spoke of the need of changing unjust structures: "Our deliberations have convinced us that the statement of the Synod of Bishops in 1971 has become even more valid and urgent today. *'Action on behalf of Justice and participation in the transformation of the world, fully appear to us a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel*, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation'... Often however persons are the victims of unjust structures. It is part of the Christian striving for a just society to seek every means of healing these structures. 'The Church considers it to be undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving' (*"Evangelii Nuntiandi"*, 36). Violence however is not an acceptable Christian solution. We encourage our committed laymen, imbued with correct attitudes towards society, to move into such fields where they can influence *the change of unjust structures*."⁴ Besides exhorting Christians to a simpler life-style and a better treatment of personnel in Church-related institutions, the Bishops finally "urge the active involvement of our laity in such areas as politics, administrative services, trade-unions and the like, where they can not only participate in the making of laws, but also ensure their implementation."⁵ Though acknowledging the need for structural changes and thus constituting a modest step forward, *these recommendations*

3. *ibid.*, p. 12.

4. "The Church's Response...", *op. cit.*, pp. 178 & 180. The emphasis is ours.

5. *ibid.*, p. 182. The emphasis is ours.

are far from sufficient, for they basically conceive change as the outcome of initiatives taken by political and administrative circles and fail to pay due attention to conscientization programmes and, still more, to people's organizations for their rights.

F. Houtart visualized the following evolution for the Church in India: "The adoption of an alternative mode will transform also the institutional action of the Church, not necessarily diminishing a concrete action for immediate assistance to people who are suffering or dying today, but shifting the emphasis from education of the rich to *conscientization of the poor*, from high quality hospitals for the upper 10% of the population to *social medicine*; from charitable work for the poor to *organization of the oppressed*."⁶

In short, the Church in India should make a clear option for the weaker sections of society, and — sincerely and boldly — face the social justice issues and the problems of societal transformation that exist in India today. The Church should unambiguously stand for a much greater socio-economic equality and popular participation in the decision-making and implementation process as well as for a radical restructuring of our value system. I do not think that it is much needed to elaborate here these general guidelines. This booklet has indeed given several examples of involvement and practical suggestions.⁷ Still more importantly, it has provided a *basic approach*. Let our technically qualified personnel in education, health care and development work, therefore increase their contacts with the underprivileged, share their lives and struggles, and discover with them how to answer their needs. In the process, they will also see which of our institutions can be re-oriented — and in what ways — and which ones should be given up to respond to more urgent and important needs.

In his desire to liberate mankind, God became man and lived among the poor. He thus gave hope and sowed the seed of liberation on earth. Will the Church in India follow the footsteps of Christ?

6. "Religion and Development...", op. cit., p. 78. The emphasis is ours.

7. For further details, see also the forthcoming CSA booklets on "Health Care in India", "Development Work and Social Justice", "Education for Social Change", "Mass Education and Conscientization", and "Mass Movements and Mass Organizations".



Will The Church Answer ?

APPENDICES

1. Christians for Socialism*

2. "During this conference we have undertaken a political analysis of the present crisis of transnational capitalism, as well as of the struggles of peoples for liberation and the construction of socialism. Starting from the perspective of our political action, we have re-defined the living, reflection, communication and celebration of our faith in Christ. Likewise, we have reflected on the situation of our churches, nationally and internationally, and also on the rise of a popular and proletarian Christianity, capable of emancipating itself from the domination of bourgeois ideology. We look with hope toward the emergence of a liberating evangelization and toward the establishment of a Church of the people. Lastly, we analyse within this new Christian current the prospects of "Christians for Socialism". We present in this final document part of the intense work of the commissions and plenary sessions.

A New Practice of the Faith

15. In the context of transnational capitalism today, many of us have discovered that our living, reflection, communication and celebration of faith in Christ find their type-place in commitment to a liberating and revolutionary praxis within history. This discovery has led us to see more clearly that *the revolutionary task is the place where faith attains its full growth and its radically subversive force*. In taking up the task, we embrace all the demands of Jesus's practice, and recognize in him the foundation of a new humanity.

17. The praxis of the exploited is a subversive praxis which seeks to build a new earth; to adopt this praxis is to live the experience of an evangelical conversion and to find a new human and Christian identity. *Conversion means to break with collective and personal compromises and to challenge oppressive power*, especially and above all, if it pretends to be Christian. It means to open ourselves to the burning question of the needs of the popular struggle. This political and spiritual rupture is the presence of the resurrection, the passover of freedom and the experience of the new life according to the Spirit.

* Extracts from the final Document of the "Second International Conference of Christians for Socialism", held in Quebec, Canada, in 1975. Though somewhat difficult, this text is important. For details on "Christians for Socialism", see above p. 40. The numbers refer to the paragraphs in the original text; the titles "Conflicts within the Church" and "New Forms of Church Life" are ours.

18. Hitherto the faith has been lived and understood in isolation from the contemporary revolutionary struggle and in a world to which a conflictual and dialectical vision of history is alien. Insofar as identification with the struggles and interest of the popular classes constitutes for the revolutionary Christian the axis of *a new way of being human and accepting the gift of God's word*, to that degree the Christian becomes aware that a faith-reflection rooted in historical praxis is really a theology linked to the liberation struggles of the oppressed. It is a militant theology arising from a class option...

19. The truth of the Gospel lies in doing it. Being a witness to the truth means making real the promise that men and women shall be brothers and sisters by transforming history from below, from among the poor of this world.

Conflicts within the Church

20. Christians who seek to live this experience of faith find themselves up against the hard reality of *a church which contradicts simultaneously the demands of their political commitment and those of their faith*. Seeing peoples, countries and continents brutally crushed, they expect a prophetic voice of denunciation from the churches which are the heirs of the rebel of Nazareth. But this voice is not heard. It is true that many Christians and some authorities of different churches are discovering that Christianity must be released from subservience to capitalism. The great majority of the churches, however, keep silent. Moreover, ecclesiastical leaders often maintain alliances and diplomatic relations with those who wield economic and political power. The mission of peace and reconciliation which the churches want to develop in a non-conflictual context enforces a stance of neutrality which favours those in power.

21. The dominant ideology makes it difficult for the great majorities of Christian people *to live a faith and a religious practice which unmasks and overcomes the anti-Christian logic of capitalism*. Rather they are led into legitimating the system by investing their energy and generosity into purely spiritual concerns. Most Christians in the rich countries have no conscience regarding the exploitation of their brothers and sisters in the underdeveloped countries and continents. Objectively speaking, they even cooperate in this exploitation and fail to perceive in this rupture of the world a rupture of Christian unity.

22. This attitude seeks to base its theological justification on the churches' image of their evangelical mission, which is conceived as apolitical and restricted to the spiritual sphere, far removed from class conflict. Such a conception permits Christians to be judges without being participants. It is coherent with a view of history in which the fundamental conflict is reduced to an opposition in the human heart between good and evil, between grace and sin. In this frame of reference the *structural conflict* existing between classes and between countries *is ignored*. Constant recourse to the "transcendence" of the spiritual sphere, of faith and of the church, calling into question not the oppressive system but the liberation effort itself, is further evidence that this principle, the theology rooted in it, and above all the praxis it seeks to justify, objectively favour the interests of the ruling classes.

23. Nevertheless, this dominant orientation does not fully express the complex and often contradictory reality of the churches and their behaviour. The weight of structures and of the dominant theologies has not succeeded in stopping *the liberating dynamic of the Gospel*. In many parts of the world, Christian people—laity, priests, pastors, nuns, brothers and bishops—give their lives with generosity of spirit in the service of the poor, sharing their life and their struggle, and valiantly defending the rights that have been violated.

24. But these factors do not eliminate the profound contradiction, in the life of the revolutionary Christians, between fidelity to the Church and fidelity to the popular classes. They refuse to leave the church, for this would mean abandoning the Gospel to the ruling classes. This contradiction and suffering engenders the search for an ecclesial alternative.

New Forms of Church Life

25. The people of God are beginning to reappropriate the scripture, re-reading it from the point of view of the poor and oppressed classes. Also, they are beginning to assume once again the responsibility of themselves directing their churchly activity. And finally, they are beginning to reappropriate liturgical and sacramental symbols and to find new possibilities for contemplation, celebration and eucharist, which can provide a common sign of *their two-fold fidelity, to Christ and to the liberating struggle of the poor*. *A truly new form of the church can be developed only in a society which has broken down the structures of domination and laid foundations of the objective conditions for liberty and justice*. We know that no type of historical society or church can ever be totally free of sin, and therefore, the forward pull toward human and Christian fullness of life will never cease.

26. Nevertheless, the utopian perspective has already attained a mobilizing impetus in today's struggle, promoting new kinds of local Christian participation still groping and provisional but not for that less vital. It is in this growth of a people's church that the Christian conscience takes on class consciousness without being reduced to it. Through this forward groping the Christian community slowly begins to envision the features of the future society. To the degree that the people become the subject of history, the people of God will be the true subject of the church.

27. The church will be an effective sign of God's love and of Christ the Liberator only if it becomes in itself an effective and prophetic sign of a different kind of future, not only beyond but *in the very heart of history*.

Conclusion

28. A growing number of Christians in five continents are joining in the struggles for the liberation of the people. These Christians are shaping a broad current, defined by a *quest of new forms of faith and of church within a proletarian and socialist political practice*. In different countries, these Christians are forming a variety of grass-roots groups and national movements. They are not, nor do they wish to be, "Christian" political parties. On the contrary, viewing the workers' movement as necessarily one, these Christians are *joining proletarian parties and organizations*. Inserted in and somewhat dispersed throughout the political struggle, they nonetheless unite to carry on *in the Christian domain an ideological struggle* which is becoming more and more important. This activity brings new motives for meeting in committed Christian communities where a liberating evangelization and the seeds of a people's church are germinating.

In this way, a new kind of Christianity, tied to the interests of the working class, is arising as an alternative to a Christianity allied ideologically and structurally to the dominant system of exploitation. As part of this wider current, the "Christians for Socialism" movement is nourished by it...

29. The development of this current of Christians committed to the struggle for liberation, and the growing strength of "Christians for Socialism" are signs of hope.

This hope is rooted in the historic force of the movement of workers and peasants, and in its capacity for resistance and struggle. This movement is growing in unity and winning over broader and broader sectors of the people, thus achieving

victories in various parts of the world. The historic force of the struggle of the poor and oppressed, in whom we acknowledge the presence of Christ, serves also as the starting point for *the liberation of the Gospel, of theology, of the churches and of society*—all of which have been laid captive by those in power and their ideologies of domination. As brothers and sisters, we call on all Christians to share actively in our concerns, in our efforts, and in the struggle we are waging."

2. Revolutionary Protestantism in China*

"It is our purpose in publishing the following statement to heighten our vigilance against imperialism, to make known the clear political stand of Christians in New China, to hasten the building of a Chinese church whose affairs are managed by the Chinese themselves, and to indicate the responsibilities that should be taken up by Christians throughout the whole country in national reconstruction in New China. We desire to call upon all Christians in the country to exert their best efforts in putting into effect the principles herein presented.

The Task in General

Christian Churches and organizations give thoroughgoing support to the "Common Political Platform", and under the leadership of the government oppose imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism, and take part in the effort to build an independent, democratic, peaceable, unified, prosperous, and powerful New China.

Fundamental Aims

(1) Christian churches and organizations in China should exert their utmost efforts, and employ effective methods, to make people in the churches everywhere recognize clearly *the evils that have been wrought in China by imperialism*; recognize the fact that in the past imperialism has made use of Christianity; purge imperialistic influences from within

* Extract from the 1950 "Christian Manifesto", prepared in consultation with Chou En-lai, of the "Three-Self Movement", which exercised a powerful influence in Communist China. The "Manifesto" was eventually signed by at least 400,000 Protestant Christians ("Documents of the Three-Self Movement", op. cit., pp. 19-20). The emphasis is ours.

Christianity itself; and be vigilant against imperialism, and especially American imperialism, in its plot to use religion in fostering the growth of reactionary forces. At the same time, the churches and organizations should call upon Christians to participate in the movement opposing war and upholding peace, and teach them thoroughly to understand and support the government's policy of agrarian reform.

(2) Christian churches and organizations in China should take *effective measures to cultivate a patriotic and democratic spirit among their adherents* in general, as well as a psychology of self-respect and self-reliance. The movement for autonomy, self-support, and self-propagation hitherto promoted in the Chinese church has already attained a measure of success. This movement from now onwards should complete its tasks within the shortest possible period. At the same time, self-criticism should be advocated, all forms of Christian activity re-examined and readjusted, and thoroughgoing austerity measures adopted, so as to achieve the goals of a reformation in the church."

3. Statement of the Asian Bishops*

"We resolve also to have the courage to speak out for the rights of the disadvantaged and powerless, against all forms of injustice, no matter from what source such abuse may come; we will not tie our hands by compromising entanglements with the rich and the powerful in our respective countries ... Along with men of other faiths, other christians and all men of goodwill, *we resolve to uphold and promote the realization of human rights and defend them wherever, whenever, and by whomsoever they are violated...* We resolve to make our special concern the lot of workers and peasants, in particular to assist in their education and organization in order to enable them to defend their rights in society, according to the teaching of the Church."

4. Statement of the CSI Seminar*

"Whether on the national scene or on the international scene, *the great human issues of our time are in the political and socio-economic spheres.* More than ever before, today the

* Asian Bishops' Meeting, 1970, paragraphs 3 & 4. The emphasis is ours.

* This Statement was signed by the participants of the "Church of South India" Seminar in 1974 (in "Vidyajyoti", Jan. 1975, p. 38). The emphasis is ours.

Church has been awakened to the demonic reality of *corporate sin* which operates and perpetuates itself through institutions and structures of society—even when some of these seem quite harmless and respectable or began with good intentions and have good people in them. We have realised that the massive dehumanisation that these structures bring into human life surpasses the evil done by individual wickedness, and defeats private good intentions. If the Gospel message is that God in Christ is active to restore to man's personal and social life the qualities of humanity the measure of which is the humanity of Jesus, then the Church cannot opt out of its responsibility to co-operate with Christ in the transformation of the manifestly unjust and inhuman society of our day. *To continue merely helping the victims of the present systems, however necessary this help might be, without consciously working, at the same time, for the transformation of the whole system is criminal irresponsibility in the face of the radical demands of the fullness of the love of Christ.* To be on the side of the oppressed, to be involved in their struggle for justice, to look at life and orient it from the point of view of the poor in the light of the Gospel ethic is the primary calling of the Church in the present context. For, the Church is called to be a sign of the Kingdom of God where the chief values are justice, peace, love and brotherhood."

5. Socialism With a Human Face*

"If neither nationalization nor equal distribution of the means of production constitutes true socialism, in what does it consist? It consists in the *socialization of the means of production*, in other words, in *social control over production, distribution and consumption*. In a truly socialist society economic life is neither left to the play of private interest and competition nor is centrally controlled by the State, but brought directly under *the control of society as a community of persons...* The community must determine all the rights associated with property, namely, the right to destroy or alienate (dominium: ownership in the strict sense), to lay down the goals of production and to determine its organization (usus), and finally, to appropriate the fruits of labour (fructus). In capitalism these rights are enjoyed by competing individuals. Such a system passes over to socialism in the measure in which people themselves as a community exercise these rights in

* S. Kappen, "Towards an Indian Model of Socialism", in "Anawim", June/August 1977, pp. 2-3, 5-7 & 10-12. Since there are several references to socialism in this booklet, I thought of including this short explanation... For details, see the CSA booklets Nos 3 & 9. The title and italics are ours.

such ways as to promote the free and full development of each individual."

"Planning, therefore, is integral to socialism. But, if imposed from above, it will kill all individual and local initiative and thereby prevent the full and free development of persons.... *There is genuine socialism only where the people themselves decide what to produce and how, and where the units of production have to be set up.* This will become possible only if the base units of administration like the village, the Panchayat and the municipality have the necessary autonomy to plan the economy in their respective areas. The relation between these base units and the higher ones must be governed by the principle of subsidiary function. This means that whatever a lower social unit can effectively accomplish should not be undertaken by any of the higher units.... *In socialism production is geared to the satisfaction of social needs.* And the greatest social need is for work. For, work is not merely the means of earning one's livelihood but also, and above all, the means of expressing one's creativity for the benefit of one's fellowmen.... What each man should enjoy as fundamental right is the opportunity not to work for wages but to create, i.e., to work for goals he has himself chosen and to work in a manner suited to the promotion of his creativity.... In so far as the use of *appropriate technology* is conducive to decentralization it facilitates people's participation in, and control over, the economy, and is therefore in keeping with socialism.... Though social ownership and use of the means of production is integral to socialism, in terms of felt needs what is crucial for the underprivileged masses is the appropriation of the product of collective labour, i.e., of the goods and services they need to lead a life worthy of human beings.... (Hence it is important) 'to give priority to the task of *raising the living standards and status of the poorest and the weakest sections*' and 'to level down as much as level up and redistribute incomes and wealth to build a just society in which austerity and sharing will replace pomp, ostentatious consumption and waste. (Janata manifesto)."

"Now we come to the most important question. How to achieve the goal of a socialism that steers clear of every form of totalitarianism? ... Relevant here are the words of Lenin: 'Socialism cannot come into being through orders given from above. It is foreign to official and bureaucratic automatism. Living creative socialism is the work of the creative masses themselves...., This being the case, the conclusion imposes itself.... *Socialism can be built up only through an organized struggle of the masses.... For this we need teams that will act as catalysts of radical social change.*'"

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